

PlayStation®

Official Magazine - Australia

E3 SPECIAL

128

» NEW GAMES: Killzone 2, MGS4
Res Evil 5, GT5, Rock Band & more!

Juiced2

NFS

VS. ProStreet

» Juiced goes head-to-head with NFS
in the ultimate street-racing showdown!

SPIDER MAN

» Why Venom and Spidey
are fighting side-by-side!

REVIEWED

GHOST RECON 2

» We put those Advanced
Warfighters through their paces!

FREE

PS3 BLU-RAY DISC!

GTAIV

» Incredible news on the
game of the decade!

THE KILLER

» How Prototype's
super villain open-
world outdoes
GTAIV!

EXCLUSIVE

COD4

» Prepare for the best-
looking game ever made!

ISSUE 7 SEPTEMBER 2007
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PLAYSTATION 3



PlayStation Portable

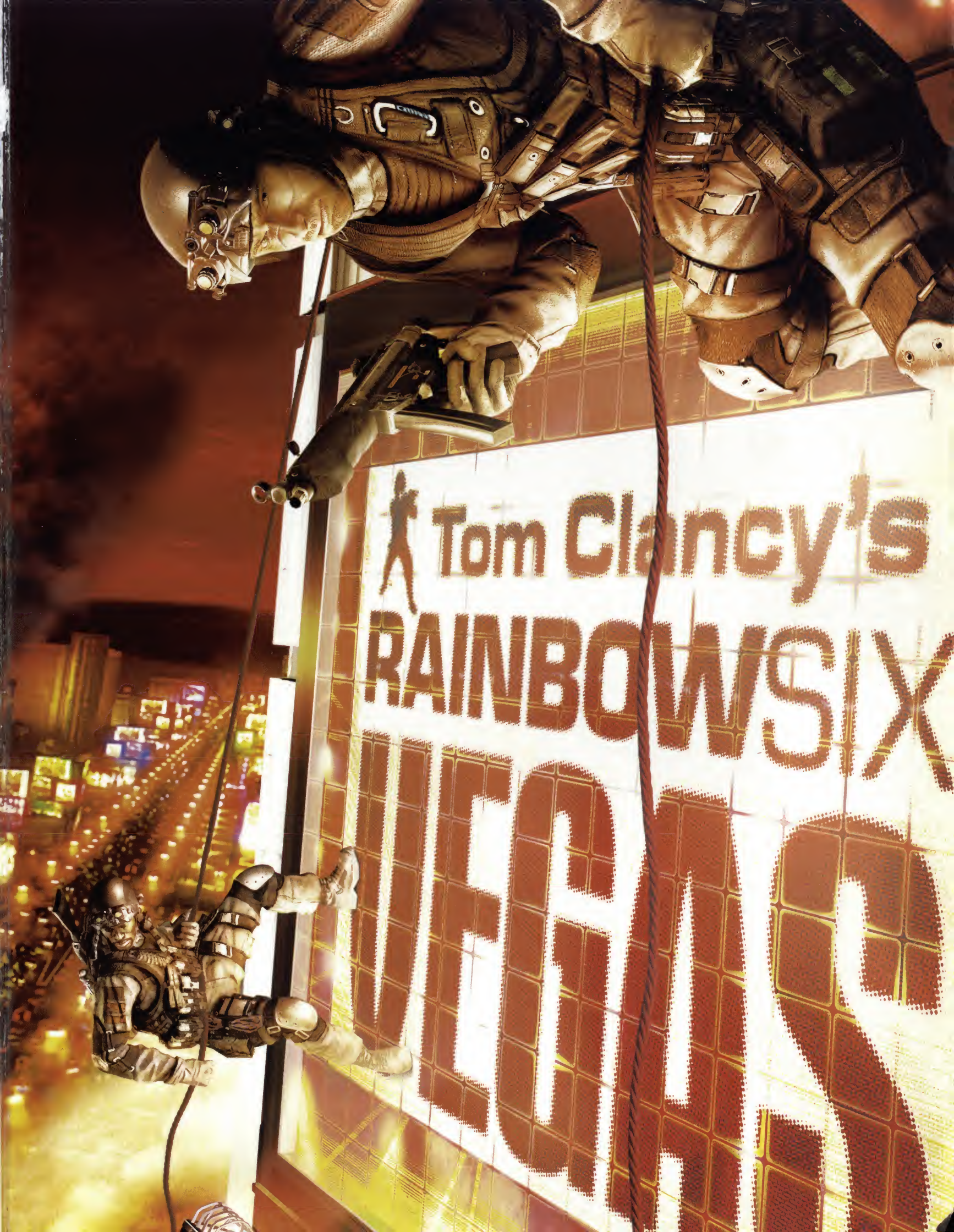


UBISOFT



Strong violence,
Coarse language

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POWER



DRIFTING

PG

Mild Gambling
References

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Games for Windows LIVE



PlayStation 2 PSP
PLAYSTATION 3

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EDITOR'S LETTER



Auto III, Devil May Cry and Metal Gear Solid 2 all monopolising huge chunks of our holiday gaming. There must be something special about a new PlayStation's first proper Christmas because history is set to repeat itself in a seriously huge way on PS3 this holiday season.

Take out a second mortgage, clock up some serious overtime or start pawning off non-essential items like cars, clothing and furniture. Whatever you do, get a serious wad of cash set aside because come September the flood begins and you're going to have to fight to keep your head above water. Scoot over to page 56 to take a gander at the 128 absolute stunners heading to a PlayStation near you.

NARAYAN PATTISON
Editor

Wow! The amount of 'truly genre defining, makes all previous games redundant and I'd donate a kidney just to play that' titles heading our way over the next year is nothing short of boggling. 2007 is set to end with the sort of bang we'll likely be waiting at least a decade to see matched. The last year on record that even comes close to being in the same league was 2001, with *Grand Theft*

Narayan Pattison

PS3 online: **The_Duude**

E3 Best in Show thoughts...



LUKE REILLY

With all due respect to the astonishing *Call of Duty 4* and the breathtaking *Assassin's Creed*, it just has to be *Rock Band*. I've always wanted to be in a band. I had a few groupies once, but that was before they realised I wasn't actually in New Kids on the Block.

PS3 online: **Capt_Flashheart**



MARK SERRELS

Metal Gear Solid 4: I've hit officially fever point. Eat fresh dog poo? Rip out my pubic hairs with my bare hands? Punch my Granny directly in the face? Right about now there's nothing I wouldn't do to get some quality time with that bad boy.

PS3 online: **Serrels**



PHILLIP JORGE

Right now, all I want to do is grab hold of *Killzone 2*, stroke her gently, whisper sweet nothings into her ear, look lovingly into her cute, gorgeously rendered eyes, then make sweet videogaming love to her all night long baby. Just like Philly knows how.

PS3 online: **PhiLLipO**



NICK O'SHEA

With Harmonix bringing the hard rockin' to EA, it's got to be *Rock Band*. After getting a hands-on with the insanely cool drum controller, I hadn't pounded skins like that since college. Huh? What? No, I wasn't in a band... Why do you ask?

PS3 online: **Sidochrome**



ANTHONY O'CONNOR

I'm torn over E3. First we had *Killzone 2* that made me spasm with delight. But then *LittleBigPlanet* came along and knocked my socks and shoes off. Then the all-too-brief glimpse of *RES* topped things off nicely. This year is going to rule the school game-wise.

PS3 online: **stoxy242**



JAMES ELLIS

Unfortunately I was denied entry into Los Angeles' E3 this year for failing to declare my pet hamster at customs. That said, it didn't stop me from checking out the coverage otherwise. *Metal Gear Solid 4* will you be my Valentine in 2008?

PS3 online: **gtfaster49**

PlayStation®
Official Magazine - Australia

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Distributed by Network Services Company in Australia and Netlink in NZ. Printed by Webstar.



Our monthly sales figure is 22,866
January - June 2006

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SHOUT OUTS: Joel "Mr E3" Graham :: The Falcon
:: Qantas for screening *The Blues Brothers*

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It's a World Record! On the 9th of June, the Habbo Juicy Fruit Beach Cafe hosted the World's Biggest Online Beach Party. Thank you to everyone who came along. Keep on rocking with the new 60 piece Juicy Fruit Megapack!



Compressed fun

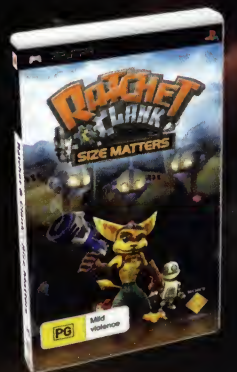
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PG

Mild
violence

playstation.com.au



Ratchet and Clank are back in their biggest, smallest adventure yet – shrunk down to microscopic size and tooled up with a devastating array of weaponry.

THERE IS NOTHING SMALL ABOUT THIS GAME

NEWS

SCREENSHOT OF THE MONTH

Edited by Mark Serrels

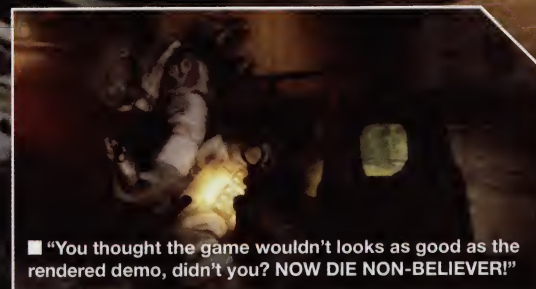
● E3 News ● PSP Redesign ● New 80GB PS3
Interview with *Unreal* producer ● and more...

TAKE ONE FOR THE TEAM

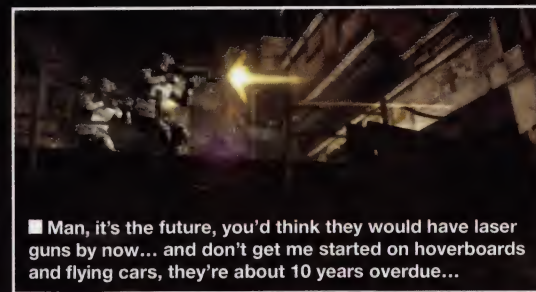
Much like its predecessors, the newest entry in the *Killzone* franchise is a squad-based affair. Looking after your teammates looks set to be an essential part of the game. Little is known thus far regarding how your team will function from an AI perspective, but we're confident that the power of the PS3 will make for some realistic and convincing behaviour.



■ The most detailed Jack-o-lantern in Halloween history...



■ "You thought the game wouldn't look as good as the rendered demo, didn't you? NOW DIE NON-BELIEVER!"



■ Man, it's the future, you'd think they would have laser guns by now... and don't get me started on hoverboards and flying cars, they're about 10 years overdue...

FOR THE LATEST GAMING NEWS HEAD TO WWW.GAMEPLAYER.COM.AU



TAKE COVER

Much like the first game, the environment will be interactive, allowing players to take cover, and shoot blindly from a position of relative safety. The dreary, run down environments, even at this early stage, look stunning.

A LITTLE PERSPECTIVE...

Rumors of *Killzone* making the jump to a third-person perspective have been greatly exaggerated. Thankfully the game has remained true to its first-person roots. There are very few games in the genre at the moment that can come close to providing the visceral thrills this title looks set to provide.



Wield your destiny



PS3 PS2 PSP

STORM WARNING

A software flood of biblical proportions is set to quench gamers' thirsts

With more than 600 titles coming to PS3, PS2 and PSP over the next year, the games almost outnumbered the journalists attending July's E3 videogame trade show in LA.

When we weren't being bogged by the sheer bulk of titles heading to PS3 (200 on Blu-ray and 180 on PSN) exclusivity was the key word at Sony's press conference. The first cat out of the bag was Epic's highly anticipated *Unreal Tournament III*. Previously thought to be a cross-platform title, *Unreal Tournament III* will only be released on PS3 this year and will benefit from a highly optimised PS3-specific version of Epic's widely used Unreal Engine 3. The long-running rumours of Ubisoft's stunning shooter *Haze* being a PS3 exclusive were finally confirmed too. The last surprise exclusives came in the form of *Infamous*, a superhero-themed open-world game by Sucker Punch (*Sly Cooper*), and a new partnership with NCsoft that will see its popular PC MMORPGs appearing on PS3. These new announcements joined the already very healthy list of exclusives including *Killzone 2*, *Uncharted*, *Heavenly Sword*, *Lair*, *Gran*

Turismo 5, *Final Fantasy XIII* and *Metal Gear Solid 4*.

To help add more momentum to PS3 hardware sales a number of new PS3 bundles and price cuts were announced. Effective immediately 60GB PS3 consoles were dropped from \$599 USD (\$685 AUD) to \$499 USD (\$570 AUD). Unfortunately, Australians currently paying \$999 AUD will see no such price cut. This announcement is sure to rub salt in the wound for Aussie PS3 fans, who have previously been paying \$315 AUD more than the Yanks for PS3s and are now being asked to pay nearly double the \$570 AUD price tag the consoles are selling for in the States.

There was, at least, some compensation for Aussies and Europeans who will be able to enjoy better PS3 bundles for the premium prices they're paying. Americans will get a \$599 USD bundle that comes with *MotorStorm* and an 80GB PS3, while we'll get two PS3 games (chosen from *Resistance*, *MotorStorm*, *Genji*, *F1 Championship Edition* and *Ridge Racer*) and a second SIXAXIS bundled with our 60GB PS3s for \$999 AUD. No announcement has been

made yet regarding whether the 80GB model will be released locally.

The PS3 may have enjoyed the most attention at the show but its older brother was still getting plenty of love. With *God of War II* already having shipped two million copies, and a further 160 PS2 games coming over the next year, Sony plans to shift another 10 million consoles this year, adding to the existing 118 million install base.

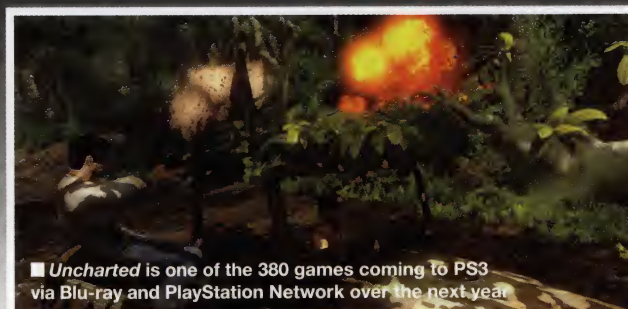
Last and not least, in terms of physical size anyway, was the PSP. A lighter, slimmer and sexier PSP will debut in

September. Both the old and the new slimline PSP will still be 100 per cent compatible with the 140 new games coming. Headlining the PSP line-up were promising new entries in the *God of War*, *Syphon Filter*, *Silent Hill* and *Castlevania* franchises.

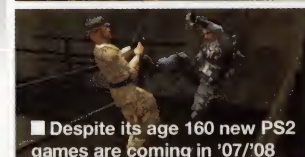
Pricing complaints aside (we want a slice of that price cut pie) it's hard not to be awed by the stunning quality and sheer magnitude of PS3, PS2 and PSP games set to flood our shelves over the next year. This could be one of the best holiday periods in gaming history.

GAMING AT A GLANCE

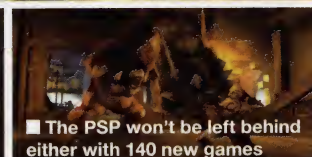
See how many games are hitting your favourite PlayStation in the coming year



■ *Uncharted* is one of the 380 games coming to PS3 via Blu-ray and PlayStation Network over the next year



■ Despite its age 160 new PS2 games are coming in '07/'08



■ The PSP won't be left behind either with 140 new games

PS3 PS2 PSP

WORKING THE GUNS

As we smugly predicted back in issue 3, the PSP has been working the guns with a new design that makes Sony's handheld beast lighter, smaller and more efficient. To be precise the new PSP will be 33% lighter, 19% slimmer, have a longer lasting battery, and will also reduce the handheld's infamous loading times. This new look thankfully comes at no cost to the impressive PSP screen, which retains the size of the original.

The basic look remains remarkably similar, unsurprising considering the PSP's general design is pretty much flawless, but other additions include an improved d-pad, and, more importantly, an output that allows gamers to plug their PSP directly into a television via scart, and even component cables for a higher quality image.

With a new jazzy ice silver tint, the newly announced redesign will also be available for purchase (in the USA at least, for now) with a 1GB memory stick, *Daxter*, and a *Family Guy* UMD. A *Star Wars* PSP, with a unique Darth Vader design, will also come packaged with the new *Star Wars Battlefront Renegade Squadron*. As of now both packages cost \$199.99 USD and are set for release in October stateside.

No word on an Australian release date, or price, for the bundles yet.



GIVEAWAY

300 GIVEAWAY!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

WIN!

If King Leonidas from hit movie *300* was a writer everything would be in caps. Every sentence would end with an exclamation mark, and the words themselves would have the mystical power to make even the meekest of men start kicking random strangers down staircases on their way home from work. Probably.

We say 'probably' because King Leonidas would never do something as girly as 'writing'. He is an arse kicker of the royal variety, period – and that's the way we like it. His voice never sounds lower than 150 decibels, and his face only has one expression: that of pure, deadly, venomous rage.

And yes, you guessed it; we have some copies of the movie to giveaway.

It's a bit different this time round however: there are two sets of prizes. The five first prizes include the premium *300* 2-disc package, bundled with merchandise such as *300* keyrings, bracelets and T-shirts. The second prize is the *300* double disc bundled with copies of *Troy* and *The Last Samurai*. We're actually reluctant to call either of these great packages first or second prizes, but that's the rules, we don't make 'em.

As ever, entering the competition is as easy as answering a simple question and sending it to us under the tagline '300 giveaway', following the instructions below.

Q. King Leonidas is played by which Scottish actor?

- a. Sean Connery
- b. Gerard Butler
- c. Ewan McGregor

HOW TO ENTER

Head to www.gameplayer.com.au, or send entries to ops@derwenthoward.com.au with the name of the competition in the subject line. You can also post entries to OPS Magazine, PO Box 1037, Bondi Junction, NSW 1355 with the name of the competition CLEARLY MARKED on the envelope. Include the name of the competition, your name, age, email address, contact number, and more importantly, your full address and postcode! All competitions close on the September 8. All competitions are open to residents of Australia and New Zealand.



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COMING

SEPTEMBER 2007

PLAYSTATION 3

INFO NUDGE

Everything else that's fit to print (and some that's not)

NOBI TIME

While many of you may be desperately disappointed to hear that the previously announced *Beautiful Katamari* is no longer coming to the PS3, you can now find solace in the fact that *Katamari* creator, Keita Takahashi, is hard at work on a new PS3 title that looks set to be just as weird as his previous games. Details are scarce regarding the awesomely named *Nobi Nobi Boy*, but we can't wait to hear more.

RUMBLE TIME?

While we're sure that Sony will release a SIXAXIS with rumble at *some point*, we're just not sure when. While popular gaming blog Kotaku reported that rumble had been "confirmed", others aren't quite so sure. It seems that while Sony isn't quite ready to officially announce anything just yet, the release of a SHOCKAXIS is pretty much inevitable. An official announcement is possibly just round the corner.

HABBO TIME

Okay folks, the online beach party of the year is over. Over the last few months you will have seen and experienced the buzz of the Juicy Fruit Beach Café at the Habbo Hotel. Those of you who made it down to the Beach Café will have enjoyed being part of the world's biggest online beach party... and those of you didn't... you'll just have to get your friends who made it to the party to tell you all about it! A big thanks to all those who entered the character competition... there could only be one winner but we sure enjoyed checking out those creative entries. Well done again to Adrian Gurra for his cracking entry.

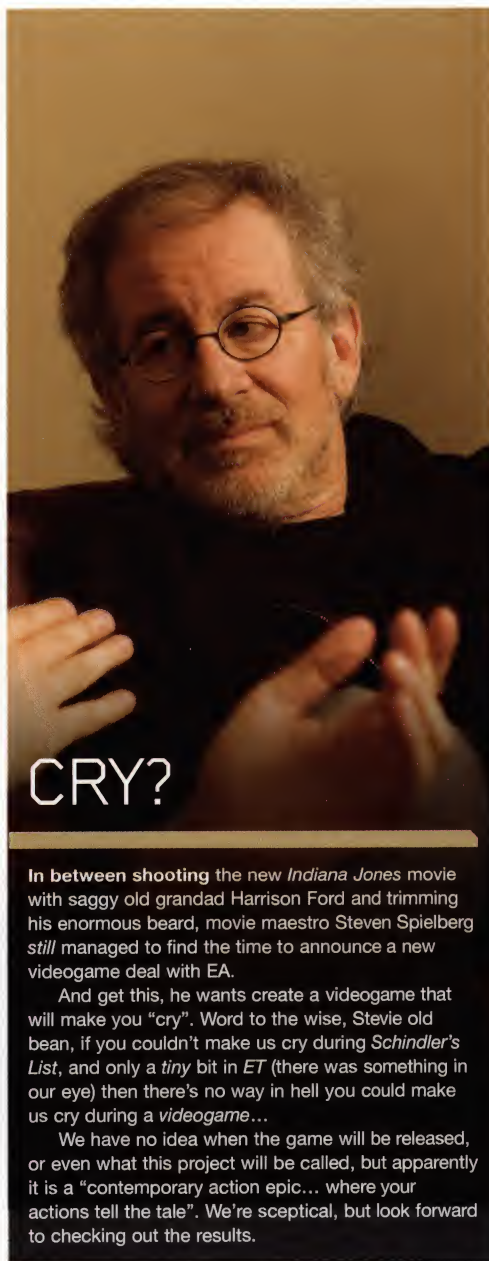
Don't forget that the Juicy Fruit 60 piece MEGAPACK is in stores now and there's no bigger fun of this gum than the Ed himself (he's a two-pack-a-day man)!

SEXY TIME

You know that stupendously hot chick, Ursula, on the cover of the magazine? Yep, that's right, the one with the sweater puppets that would make even Molly Meldrum turn round and whisper 'nice rack'. Well guess what kiddies, she signed a copy of our magazine, and we're giving it away to one lucky reader. All you have to do is answer one simple question, and send the answer to us under the tagline 'Ursula giveaway' following the instructions on page 15.

Question:
Which game are Ursula's knockers trying to flog?

- Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights
- Need for Speed ProStreet
- Gran Turismo 5



CRY?

In between shooting the new *Indiana Jones* movie with saggy old grandad Harrison Ford and trimming his enormous beard, movie maestro Steven Spielberg still managed to find the time to announce a new videogame deal with EA.

And get this, he wants create a videogame that will make you "cry". Word to the wise, Stevie old bean, if you couldn't make us cry during *Schindler's List*, and only a tiny bit in *ET* (there was something in our eye) then there's no way in hell you could make us cry during a videogame...

We have no idea when the game will be released, or even what this project will be called, but apparently it is a "contemporary action epic... where your actions tell the tale". We're sceptical, but look forward to checking out the results.

GIVEAWAY

HEADSHOT

You've got to hand it to Mark Wahlberg. One minute he's Marky Mark, buffed up in his Calvin Boxers, bustin' out 'phat' rhymes, next he's a credible actor, putting in stellar performances in *The Departed*, *Three Kings*, and *Boogie Nights*. How the hell did that happen? It's a tremendous achievement. Let's put it this way: when was the last time you saw Vanilla Ice get an Oscar nomination?

We're impressed. We're also impressed with Wahlberg's latest effort, *Shooter*. From Antoine Fuqua, director of *Training Day*, *Shooter* focuses on the story of Bob Swagger a former Force Recon sniper framed for crime he was trying to prevent. Swagger must find out who framed him and bring them to justice, while evading the nationwide manhunt following his every move.

We have ten copies of the movie to giveaway, bundled with a *Shooter* hoodie and a copy of the second season of *Oz* to boot. All you people need to do is answer this simple question and send it to us under the headline 'Shooter Giveaway', following the instructions on page 15.

Q: Mark Wahlberg's brother Donnie featured in a well known boy band, what were they called?

- New Kids on the Block
- Jackson 5
- Take That

PS3 PS2 PSP

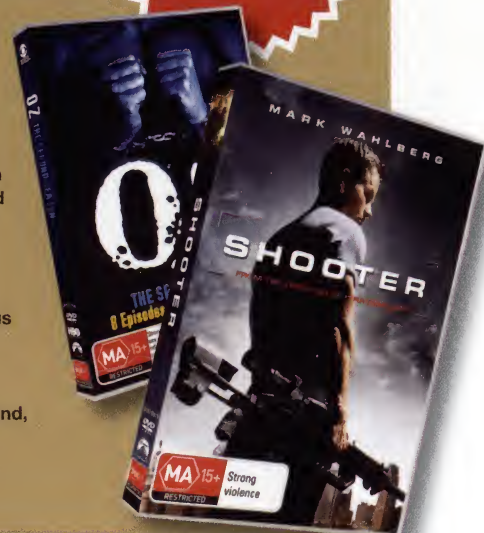
60GB PS3 DISCONTINUED?

The premium 60GB PS3 looks set to be on its way out, if preliminary reports from E3 are to be believed. The temporary \$100 dollar price drop (which translates over here as two extra games in a package deal) is reportedly Sony's strategy for offloading the remaining 60GB PS3s in order to introduce the new 80GB version. The 60GB will be available until "supplies of that unit are depleted", according to Sony executive Dave Karraker.

The 80GB PS3, available in the US in August, will retail at the previous price of \$599 US (and come bundled with *MotorStorm*). We have no idea at this point when the 80GB will be available for Australian gamers, but as soon as we know, you'll know. Watch this space for updates.



WIN!





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Harvey Norman

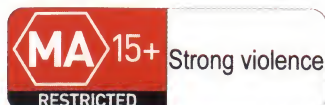
"It's shaping up to be an unashamedly violent and heart-stopping experience from first clip emptied to the last shot fired."

Tristan Ogilvie
Editor, Official Xbox 360 Magazine

JOHN WOO PRESENTS STRANGLEHOLD

www.strangleholdgame.com

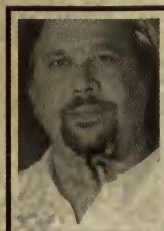
Coming September 2007



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Totally Unreal

OPS got the chance to wax lyrical with Jeff Morris about the upcoming *Unreal Tournament III*



OPS: Why the name change? Was it coming for a while?

JM: We felt that there were a number of advantages to switching to *UTIII*. The first was that it was the third incarnation of the

technology, Unreal Engine 3. Another reason was to communicate how big a leap *UTIII* is over previous titles in areas like single-player. Many of our fans consider *UT2003* and *UT2004* to be the same game with different content, and from that perspective, this is the third title in the series. Overall we're very happy with the name change.

OPS: If our memory serves us correctly there hasn't been an *Unreal Tournament* title on a PlayStation console for seven years. Have there been any radical changes during this time?

JM: What hasn't changed! The PS2 version of *UT* was all on-foot combat, where we've got a lot of vehicle focused game types. Our multiplayer feature set is far more robust so matchmaking has never been easier. You can see the legacy, but *UTIII* is a whole new ballgame.

OPS: In the past online-focused games have stumbled on consoles because of their less online-savvy audience. With broadband penetration up and an increasing amount of console gamers online, however, do you think now is the time for shooters like yours to shine?

JM: Absolutely. In a lot of ways, consoles have driven innovation for multiplayer games in the last few years because ease of use has always been paramount for game systems. Things that used to be genre norms, like an Excel spreadsheet of servers to choose from, have been rightfully replaced in most instances by "find me a great game" options that simplify the entire experience. Consoles also have driven the adoption of microphones for both AI command and

talking to other human players. Multiplayer coming to consoles in full force is good for anyone who likes multiplayer games, on PCs or elsewhere.

OPS: *UTIII* has been in development for quite some time. Is it a commitment to quality, labour-intensive next gen development or a combination of both that has caused this? We've heard that characters took two months to create!

JM: Epic is fortunate in that we're given the amount of time to finish our games that we need. Asset creation for Unreal Engine 3 is far more time consuming than in previous generations, but the results are worth it. For a game like *UT* with loads of weapons, vehicles, characters and game types, it's a titanic effort to get everything up to our very high standards.

OPS: Is it tough walking the line between keeping fan favourites and adding new content? It is also tough actually balancing new weapons and vehicles for gameplay's sake?

JM: You always want to make sure what people liked about your previous titles are present in your new one, but at the same time try to appeal to folks who might have passed on those older games. We playtest every day to ensure that additions "feel like *UT*" and don't swing the mechanics into a region that we don't think our existing fans will like. At the same time working with a franchise like *UT* is a dream come true.

OPS: We hear that, despite its multiplayer approach, *Unreal Tournament III* will feature a robust single-player experience for those without broadband (or without friends). Could you explain this?

JM: We're keeping the wraps on our single-player for the moment. I can say that it's a far more character driven than any of the single player components of previous *UTs*. You're playing a specific person in *UTIII*, with a distinct personality, and this break from the past has resulted in a very compelling off-line experience.

Q: For the confused, what is it that *Unreal Tournament III* can offer over the multiplayer portions of conventional console shooters like *Resistance*, or *Call of Duty 3*?

JM: We let our games speak for themselves.

Q: With the similarly online-focused *Enemy Territory: Quake Wars* also coming to PS3 is there any more pressure on your team to really pull out all the stops?

JM: We let our games speak for themselves.

OPS: Coming from a PC background, are there any particular advantages or disadvantages to PS3? Has the storage capacity of Blu-ray proven useful?

JM: The PS3 embodies the no-compromise philosophy we're taking in bringing *UT* to the consoles this generation. We've got the hardware in these game systems that allow us to deliver the experience we've always wanted to on consoles.

OPS: Are you planning on any downloadable content down the track to keep the game fresh and the online community blasting away? Will PS3 users be able to customise content like their PC counterparts?

JM: We're definitely exploring it. PS3 has a wonderful network infrastructure and the prospect of user created content being available to our customers online is highly appealing.

OPS: We imagine it might be a little hard to choose, but what's your favourite weapon right now?

JM: I'm really liking the new impact hammer. There's a real "bullfighting" feel when you try to use its EMP and disable an enemy vehicle. You want to get close to use it, but not too close...

the sesame seeds



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TOP 10 GAMES CHART



Rank	Title	Category	Distributor
1	Formula One	Racing	EA
2	MotorStorm	Action	Atari
3	Rainbow Six	FPS	Activision
4	Need for Speed Carbon	Racing	EA
5	Ninja Gaiden Sigma	Action	Atari
6	Call of Duty 3	FPS	Activision
7	Fight Night Round 3	Sports	EA
8	Virtua Tennis 3	Sports	SEGA
9	F.E.A.R.	FPS	Vivendi
10	The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	RPG	Ubisoft

RELEASE SCHEDULE



Format	Title	Category	Distributor
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SEPTEMBER

PS3	Clive Barker's Jericho	FPS	Atari
PS3	Lair	Action	Sony
PS3	Heavenly Sword	Action	Sony
PS3	Stranglehold	Action	Red Ant
PS3	Skate	Sports	EA
PS3	Sega Rally Revo	Racing	Sega
PS3	Blacksite: Area 51	FPS	Red Ant
PS3/PS2	Stuntman: Ignition	Racing	THQ
PS2/PS3/PSP	Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	Racing	THQ
PS3	Colin McRae DIRT	Racing	Atari
PSP	Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Heroes	Fighting	Ubisoft

OCTOBER

PS3	Hei\$T	Action	Atari
PS3	Ratchet & Clank Future: TOD	Adventure	Sony
PS3	Grand Theft Auto IV	Action	Rockstar
PS3	Warhawk	Flight sim	Sony
PS3	Beowulf	Action	Ubisoft

NOVEMBER

PS3	Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	Action	Atari
PS3	WWE: SmackDown vs. Raw 2008	Fighting	THQ
PS3	Assassin's Creed	Action	Ubisoft
PS3	Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	FPS	Activision
PS3	Need for Speed ProStreet	Racing	EA
PS3	Haze	FPS	Ubisoft



GIVEAWAY



SUNBURNT

Unless you are a pasty albino who gets sunburnt every time a light bulb gets switched on, it's hard not to love the sun. It provides us with light, heat, vitamin C, and sexy, tanned ladies in bikinis: what's not to like? Well normally we would say nothing, but according to Danny Boyle's new movie *Sunshine*, the sun ain't all sweetness and light.

Why? Well in 2057 the stupid sun simply refuses to shine, and we don't mean in a Scottish winter kind of way either – it's literally losing its power to fuel life on earth. Humanity's response is as predictable as ever: we get a big ass nuclear weapon and try and bomb the shit out of it.

With such an interesting premise, *Sunshine* promises to be a science fiction classic in the making. Thankfully, courtesy of Fox, we have some copies of the movie to give away, but wait there's more – a helluva lot more. In addition to copies of *Sunshine* Fox has also provided us with nine other movies to bundle in, including *Borat*, *The Marine*, *Rocky Balboa*, *Turistas*, *Epic Movie*, *Idiocracy*, *Last King of Scotland*, *28 Days Later* and *The Sentinel*. We have five of these packs to give away; all you need to do in order to receive this prize is answer one simple question and send the answer to us under the headline 'Sunshine Giveaway' following the instruction on page 15.

Question:

Sunshine director Danny Boyle was also responsible for one of these three movies – which was it?

- a. *Money Train*
- b. *Trainspotting*
- c. *Training Day*



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WIN!

SURPRISE SURPRISE...

We Aussies are often bemoaning the outright stupidity that denies videogames the same R18+ ratings that movies are allowed, but in the case of the gruesome *Manhunt 2* such a rating probably still wouldn't have saved RockStar's latest from the chopping block.

Yep, you guessed it, from the looks of things *Manhunt 2*'s quest for an official rating is looking grimmer by the day. The game has been banned for sale in the UK and Ireland and has landed a preliminary Adults Only rating in the US. *Manhunt 2* was originally scheduled for a July 10 release on the PS2 and PSP, but Sony corporate policy forbids third-parties from releasing AO-rated titles.

It's a huge shame, since the game was shaping up to be something special – we were looking forward to some testicle ripping action – but all is not lost. It's possible that, due to the refusal of pretty much every country to deem the game worthy of release, that RockStar will release a slightly less violent version, so that the powers that be will deem the game worthy of a general release. In a written statement, the publisher stood behind the game.

"We continue to stand behind this extraordinary game. We believe in freedom of creative expression, as well as responsible marketing, both of which are essential to our business of making great entertainment."

■ Cruel yet hilarious.



BIRD'S EYE VIEW

So the statistics are now beginning to confirm what we've all suspected for a while now: more girls are playing games than ever. And guess what? Developers worldwide are scrambling like mad in a desperate, last-minute attempt to pander to this new market.

But when the hell have they ever known what the hell girls want? It's a stereotype, but when most games developers have probably nervously avoided female contact since high school, it's a safe bet that they have no idea how to reel girls in for a gaming experience that we can relate to.

Simply put: we need the game equivalent of the 'chick flick'.

To be fair though, things are improving, a game like *The Sims* is the perfect example, and that game has sold through the roof, but we're hungry for more!

What's really required is more female voices in the industry. Jade Raymond at Ubisoft is a great example, but what game is she working on? *Assassin's Creed*: the manliest game on the planet. Come on people, sort it out.

Jessica Greene, Games Writer

WINNERS

From the comps in OPS #5

Ninja Gaiden Sigma: S Howarth, D Picciotto, K Dante, J Hiatt, S Huxley, W Page, S Yu, B Holland, E Koons, B Paley. **Van Wilder:** P Tapper, A Potter, P Naylor, A Wexler, O Bishop, B Kapstrom, A Reed, K Pan, E Winsberg, N Medlin. **The Darkness:** J Bronszewski, J Ward, R Keyes, D Prescott, S Anton. **Transformers:** L Stiven. All other winners notified via email or phone.



ENTER THE DRAGON

LETTERS

HAVE YOUR SAY & WIN GRAW 2!



LETTER OF THE MONTH

CHEATERS NEVER PROSPER (ANYMORE)

I've got a major gripe with games these days. Sure they're looking spunky, and sure they're still as fun as they used to be, but I have one serious problem – and it's not going away.

What the hell happened to all the good cheats?

Why doesn't *Hitman: Blood Money* have any of the same cool cheats as *Hitman 2: Silent Assassin*? Why doesn't *V8 Supercars 3* boast the same amount of rad unlocks as *V8 Supercar Pro Race Driver*? Why does *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3* have better cheats than every *Hawk* game since?

Has the concept slipped the minds of every developer besides Rockstar North?
Scott, via email

We couldn't agree with you more Scott – and it's quite the coincidence you brought it up. We've planned a glance back at the best ever cheats for next issue asking that precise question. Why aren't developers including the same useful and/or wacky cheats we enjoyed in the past? It's a valid question. Videogame development is a great deal more expensive and time-consuming than it used to be, so we imagine finding cash in the budget and time in the schedule to devote resources to creating cheats is less easy to justify these days. However, there isn't really any reason why classic, simple cheats (ones that probably require no more than a tweaked line of code) are becoming increasingly infrequent. It's also distressing that the model of paying for cheats looks like it may take off. Codemasters has been making gamers call for cheats for years (unique codes created by its games when they first boot up mean you require specific unlock codes) and paying to download cheats is already here. Developers take note: find the cheat list for *GTA: San Andreas*. Study it. Emulate it. We understand if developers are worried about the integrity of the game being ruined, but nothing adds lifespan to a game more than the ability to replay it with all manner of crazy cheat advantages. Bring back cool cheats! Now!

WINNER!



Letter of the month wins a copy of the intense *GRAW 2* thanks to those fine chaps at Ubisoft!

■ Luke's smiles turned to tears a second later when he discovered that this 'hot chick' was actually a vampire... and a man...



HE AIN'T GOT GAME

I'm a female gamer who's addicted to her PlayStation. I had to laugh at your tongue in cheek story on "How to get your Girlfriend Gaming". I've had the reverse problem though. My new man had never even played PlayStation. What a travesty! I introduced him to something easy – *Burnout*. Just accelerate and steer, right? Not too many buttons to learn for a beginner, right? Wrong! The boy was so unco, I was aghast! We tried a few games, but he just wasn't into it. We're not together anymore, so now it's just me and the PS2. I'm not complaining though. It means more quality time with my PS. *Burnout Revenge* anyone?

Sue, via email

Great to hear from you, Sue. Lucky you didn't include your PS3 online name though, or we're sure you'd have your inbox filled with friend requests five minutes after this issue went on sale. Here's hoping you find a more game-savvy bloke next time.

NUMBER ONE FAN

I got your OPS #4 and was hanging out for the ten-page look at the new *GTA*. I would have been happy with that, but then I saw you had the *Assassin's Creed* feature. Brilliant! I have been gagging for some information on this since I first laid my eyes on the trailer. But it didn't stop. I saw you also had a review about *Oblivion*, a quick glance saw you gave it a 10. Definitely worth checking out. My day was getting better with every page. Then you had the insight to put in what is available at the PS3 Store for download! Surely you have reached the pinnacle of PlayStation Magazine... er... ism. I haven't been that excited from reading a magazine since... well, almost ever. Thanks team, for the very best read I have had in a LONG time. Now the problem is, I have to make it last

■ "Fireworks! Cool! Oh, wait, they fire bullets? Not cool!"



until the next issue comes. Hurry up with the next issue dudes.

Bob, via email

Thanks for your gushing praise, Bob. That cash we promised you is in the mail.

TOUGH CRITIC

I'll be blunt. I can't say I'm impressed with the current so-called 'next generation' games. You see, I don't really understand why they're so next gen. I have a PlayStation 3 and I bought the two best games, *Resistance* and *MotorStorm*, but I left the experience terribly disappointed. Those games incorporate nothing next gen except graphics and sound – nothing more!

What's more, you've given those two titles perfect 10/10 scores. It's gameplay that really makes a title next gen. Graphics and sound are still important, but games are games because they are based around gameplay. In any case, my point is, there is really nothing next gen out there and jack-all that even looks potentially next





gen. Please, shed some light on the subject for me and restore my faith.
Michael Jolta, via email

Where do we start? Firstly, a game getting 10/10 does not mean it's a perfect game. It merely means the game represents amazing entertainment and should be picked up by all fans of the genre. Yes, it's the visuals that are the most immediately obvious next gen feature of Resistance and MotorStorm but that doesn't mean they aren't also packing plenty of gameplay that can't be done on PS2. The bottom line is that both Resistance and MotorStorm are the two best games released in their respective genres and deserve their well-earned 10/10 scores. To mark them any more harshly would mean we'd be lucky to give out a single 10/10 each year, thereby defeating the purpose of scoring out of ten.

NO CONVICTION

Why the hell do PC and Xbox 360 owners get *Splinter Cell Conviction*, while we PlayStation users get left out? It looks like such a cool game! It's on Xbox 360, so it will have awkward controls and 'not as good as PS3 graphics', but, like *Deus Ex*, you can use any object, you are a fugitive and the CIA is corrupt. It looks like the perfect PS3 game. Will PS3 get a way better *Splinter Cell* game any time soon?

Will, via email

Chillax Will. Let the 360 owners have Splinter Cell: Conviction for six months before the superior PS3 version arrives. Ubisoft's still showing the PS3 plenty of love by making its far more exciting Haze a PS3 exclusive. And don't forget about the flood of other upcoming PS3 exclusives like Heavenly Sword, Uncharted, Ratchet & Clank Future, Killzone 2, Metal Gear Solid 4, Gran Turismo 5 and Final Fantasy XIII.

HAPPY CUSTOMER

Hey boys and girls, first up, great job on the mag. I have been getting it since the PS2 came out. I can even remember magazines with the likes of *Red Faction* on the cover. I have to agree with Cheyne Bright from the July issue. While the PS3 might not quite be the meaning of life I can honestly say I have never been happier with something I had to spend so much money on. I was saving up for well over a year to be able to afford my PS3 but it was well worth it. Even my wife thinks so, as it keeps me off the PS2 and lets her play *FFXII*. So, to anyone still thinking about buying or not buying a PS3, just do it. You won't be disappointed! To anyone confused by this email, yes I am a gamer, yes I am married and yes she plays games too! Can you guys tell Rockstar to hurry up with *GTAIV*? Ta.

Jon Barrett, PS3 online: elbop

You're living the dream, Jon, living the dream... We feel your pain on GTAIV. We sent away for a set of suspended animation pods we found on the internet, but on the off chance they don't work we can only recommend you do what we're doing and play through GTA: SA another couple of times to get through to October.

SPEAK TO US

Love the new mag? Hate the new mag? We want your opinions and questions on *OPS*, on games – on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:

OPS Feedback
Derwent Howard
PO Box 1037
Bondi Junction, NSW 1355
ops@derwenthoward.com.au

CUTTINGS

Delicious bite-sized letter morsels that are easy to swallow

ON THE PULSE

I noticed how you said that in *Assassin's Creed* Altair has a finger missing on his left hand but on pages 66 and 67 (of *OPS* #4) there are two pics showing his finger isn't missing. Why?

Jaradth Hintz

Wow. We would not want to play Where's Wally with you. Altair is missing the ring finger on his left hand to allow for his nifty retractable blade to shoot out. The reason the finger on his left hand had grown back in a couple of the images was simply because they had been flipped to make them fit on the page better.

PS3 FATALITY

When is *Fatal Inertia* for PS3 coming out? And don't say it isn't. I know it is. I saw a trailer for it the other day in JB Hi-Fi.

Alexander Brown

Fatal Inertia may or may not still be coming to PS3, but it's definitely not coming out any time soon since there has been nothing new seen or heard of it for quite a while.

GOD ONLY KNOWS

Will the PS3 be GOD-LIKE?

Mark Fox

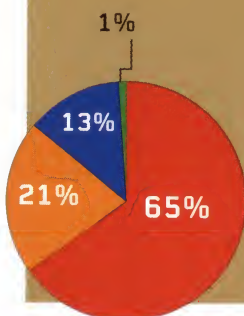
We can't say that we've met many gods to compare the PS3 against, but if you mean will it be kicking ass like Kratos from God of War... then, hell yes it will.

READER SURVEY RESULTS

Thanks to everyone who took the time to fill in our reader survey. We got a stack of great feedback from our readers, who it turns out are typically PS3-owning, broadband equipped 25 year-olds.

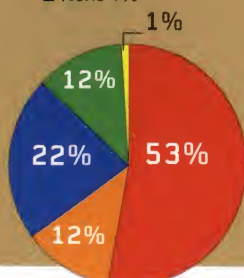
1. Do you own a PS3?

- A Yes 65%
- B No but soon 21%
- C I'll wait a while 13%
- D No plans 1%



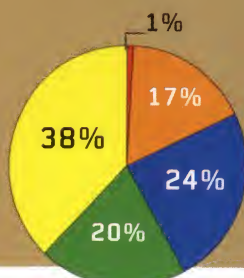
2. Interest in PS3 demo disc

- A Huge 53%
- B Moderate 12%
- C Only 'non-PS Store' content 22%
- D Only if PS2 compatible 12%
- E None 1%



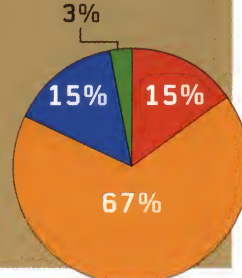
3. Age

- A 1-10 1%
- B 11-15 17%
- C 16-20 24%
- D 21-25 20%
- E 25 and older 38%



4. Internet access

- A Broadband 67%
- B Broadband cable or ADSL 15%
- C Dial up 15%
- D None 3%



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PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** ACTION
■ **PLAYERS:** 1-TBC
■ **RELEASE:** OCTOBER 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** ROCKSTAR
■ **DEVELOPER:** ROCKSTAR NORTH
■ **WEB:** www.rockstargames.com/IV

GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

It's good to be the king...

Some years back, a unique and revolutionary piece of entertainment found itself in front of the eyes of an unsuspecting Australian public. Highly controversial, it sparked instant outrage from community leaders, politicians and police. Many accused it of glorifying criminals and glamourising violence, particularly against police officers. Nonetheless, it survived a brief ban and Australian audiences lapped it up. Despite all the bad press, fuming officials and whingeing wowzers, it was extremely successful both here and overseas and made a fortune – writing its way into the history books in the process.

We're talking, of course, about *The Story of the Kelly Gang*, the 1906 Australian silent movie widely regarded as the world's first feature-length film.

And they say times change.

100 years later and we're still having the same argument. It's the same boring, tirade as it was this time last century. Technology changes, sadly attitudes don't.

We're not here to dwell on this nonsense, particularly when the bulk of it comes from a nation that adores violence, yet spirals out-of-control the second a tit is shown on television. The point we're trying to make is that, if you're not already, you can ignore the right-wing, tabloid-selling, bandwagon hopping, blog-filling bullshit when it comes to the genre-defining *Grand Theft Auto* series.

Has it stopped you from playing one in the past, and, more importantly, has it stopped Rockstar from pulling out all the stops to completely shatter expectations with *GTAIV*?

The answer, of course, is no.

OF COURSE...

60 million. That's how many *GTA* games Rockstar has sold since *GTAIII*. But if the 60 million units sold is the defiant middle finger to critics and detractors alike, *GTAIV* is the chillaxed, confident grin behind it, comfortable in the knowledge that number's about to get a hell of a lot higher.

There are a lot of great games coming out this year, but none of them are as eagerly anticipated as *GTAIV*. We're positively salivating, and we've seen it. Twice. We trust it must be

■ "Seatbelts. Check. Handbrake. Check. Mirrors. Check. Damn I'm looking fine..."



■ "Hot dawgs... get yer hot dawgs..." Niko just had to stop. He loved hot dogs



INFO BYTE

After the release of the first trailer, New York City officials voiced their contempt at the choice of their city as the inspiration for the setting of *GTAIV*, and said that a game like *GTA* does not represent the city's crime levels accurately.

■ "I've got to remember to tape *Ugly Betty* tonight or the missus will go ballistic..."





■ "Mum? Santa? What the hell is going on here?!"



■ GET TO THE CHAWPAH!!!



IT'S ONLY NATURAL

Grand Theft Auto IV will be the first Rockstar game to feature euphoria. Euphoria is a game animation engine created by NaturalMotion based on Dynamic Motion Synthesis, NaturalMotion's proprietary technology for animating 3D characters on-the-fly. Euphoria provides a full simulation of a character, including body, muscles and a motor nervous system. As such, there are no 'canned' animations – all characters' actions and reactions are synthesised in real-time, and they dynamically adjust depending on the situation. LucasArts has previously announced it too will be utilising euphoria in the upcoming *Indiana Jones* game, plus *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed*.



infinitely harder for you, our readers, scraping by on words and pictures (of which we have a STACK of, in case you haven't noticed). The wait is nearly over – but here are a few things we haven't mentioned yet.

GTAIV sees the series return to Liberty City, Rockstar's take on the Big Apple. We've reported before on just how convincingly Rockstar has digitised quintessential New York nuances to create the most authentic, living, breathing game world yet. The attention to detail invested in the roads and architecture is astounding. Rockstar has

recreated four or the five boroughs in New York City, as well as parts of New Jersey. Manhattan is dubbed Algonquin, Brooklyn is called Broker, the Bronx is now Bohan, Queens is Dukes and New Jersey has been named Alderney. Liberty City for *GTAIV* is smaller than the map in *GTA: San Andreas* but it's significantly bigger than any single *GTA* city yet, and when you take into account the level of vertical space available and the number of buildings you can enter, the scope is drastically increased. Main protagonist Niko won't have access to every building, but meetings will often

take place on the floors of skyscrapers and, rumour has it, Rockstar is working to make falling from buildings something to behold.

There won't be any irrelevant space in Liberty City this time around. Not even rooftops have escaped the artists' clutches – each is covered in weathered detail. There won't be any planes in *GTAIV* but there will be helicopters, so you'll be able to perch them on any building and admire the craftsmanship.

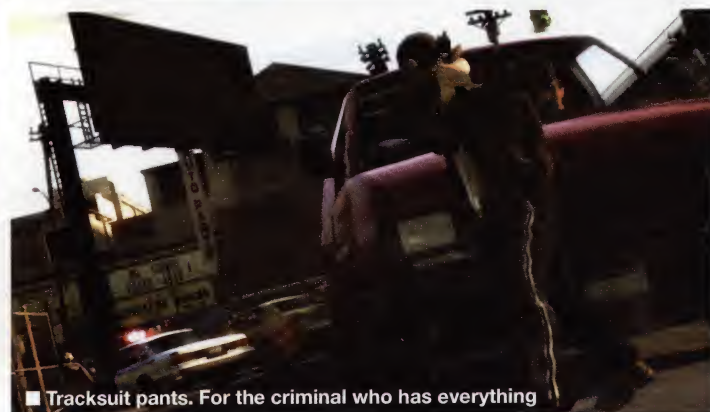
Rockstar's aim this time around is to further blur the line between missions and non-mission play. The freedom to



■ "First I'll steal this car, then I'll get some new pants. These joggers are totally clashing with my outfit..."



■ "Hold on a second - I *think* they're shooting at us..."



■ Tracksuit pants. For the criminal who has everything

play outside of the set story missions will be more relevant to your progress through the game, and what you do outside of tasks will affect what you do on-task. Furthermore, missions will often overlap and you'll be able to have a variety of objectives on your plate at any one time.

TRAILER TRASH

The recently released second trailer for *GTAIV*, called 'Looking for that Special Someone', was released to the public on June 28 and showcased a number of intriguing new elements we hadn't seen before. At one stage Niko is shown hanging onto the back of a speeding truck, not unlike one of our mysterious screenshots last month. If it was one isolated screenshot it could arguably be written off as a possible shot from a cut-scene, but seeing it twice (on two different trucks) seems to suggest that this kind of behaviour will work its way into the game somehow. Hijacking trucks, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*-style? Doesn't seem out of the question.

Similarly, the trailer also showed Niko dangling precariously from the skids of a helicopter as it soared high above the streets. The implications of this are unknown, but the move

could be tied to Niko's truck-surfing shenanigans.

The trailer also illustrated the increased tenacity of the police, who surround buildings and are able to take cover behind objects and use blindfire to suppress you while remaining safe (something you're also able to do). A brief shootout showed one car being peppered with bullet holes and air rushing out of a punctured tyre, as well as Niko standing behind the open boot of a sedan holding an assault rifle (suggesting the trunks of cars may be needed to carry larger weapons). Bullets slamming through the windscreen left jagged holes surrounded by a spiderweb of cracks, and in the closing moments we saw Niko bailing from a moving car, leaving the unmanned vehicle to continue on into a petrol station where it caused a severe explosion. We saw a similar event unfold during a brief car chase during our Rockstar New York visit last issue, so we can assure you it's no cut-scene.

FEEL THE R.A.G.E.

If there's one thing we can't stress enough, particularly if you have seen the trailer, is that everything you've seen is running on R.A.G.E., the Rockstar

Advanced Game Engine. What you see is what you get, and it really does look this good. Chrome gleams and the remarkable real-time shadows mean the shadows from pedestrians are diluted by subway grates and shadows from hovering choppers stretch and warp to the size and shape of nearby buildings. Car tyres actually have distinct tread patterns and sub-machine guns spew individual casings all over the ground. The visuals are quite incredible, especially for a game of its size and ESPECIALLY considering there are no loading times after you begin.

The scope of Rockstar's latest opus is looking set to redefine the sandbox genre with gusto, and we can't wait for the results. We'll have a hands-on soon, we promise. **♫ Luke Reilly**

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "On the one hand our goal is to create a game which feels like the ultimate gangster crime experience and on the other hand, it's to create a game that feels like the ultimate living in a modern city experience."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ Nothing. It speaks for itself.

LOOKING FOR THAT SPECIAL EDITION

Rockstar has announced that *Grand Theft Auto IV* will be available as a special edition on October 19 in Australia, the same day as the regular edition. The special edition will come in a customised *Grand Theft Auto* metal safety deposit box containing the game for PS3, the *Grand Theft Auto IV* Art Book, selected soundtrack CD (featuring new material from top artists, only available on this release), a Rockstar keychain (for keys, we guess) and a Rockstar duffel bag. The *GTAIV* Special Edition will set you back a cool \$149.95.



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PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** ADVENTURE
■ **PLAYERS:** 1
■ **RELEASE:** NOVEMBER 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** UBISOFT
■ **DEVELOPER:** UBISOFT MONTREAL
■ **WEB:** www.ubi.com



INFO BYTE

If Altair's being chased by the city's guards and he manages to climb to a spot they can't reach, the bastards will try to dislodge him by throwing rocks.

■ "Do a flip!" shouted the soon to be unemployed suicide negotiator

ASSASSIN'S CREED

The next gen textbook has just been written

After collecting last year's E3 Game of Show from this very magazine, we were expecting big things from its 2007 E3 demo but we were genuinely shocked and amazed at just how much depth has been added to this revolutionary PS3 game.

TROUBLE AT WORK

The *Assassin's Creed* demo revolves around a normal day at the office for Altair; killing a local slave trader being today's assignment. The demo begins with Altair doing his best Batman pose, perched on a rooftop, surveying the city hundreds of metres below. We barely get

a second to appreciate the kilometres of stunningly rendered 12th century Jerusalem before Altair launches off the building and swan dives gracefully into a hay-filled cart. As well as looking incredibly cool, this move enables Altair to travel from the rooftops to the street below in seconds, without alarming nearby civilians.

Like many of the elements of *Assassin's Creed*, the more you interact with the civilians the more depth you discover. Bump into one as you walk by and they may drop the goods they were carrying, leading to a startled reaction from those nearby and plenty of context

sensitive dialogue like "Why did he do that?" However, if you were to roughly shove someone to the ground, then a huge disturbance would be created and any passing guards would react severely.

TARGET SIGHTED...

Altair soon arrives at the slave trader Talal's headquarters and begins scanning for a way past the three heavies guarding the door. One way would be to fight straight through them. Another method would be to blend in with the nearby priests and pass by unnoticed. This time Altair decides to climb the side of the building up to the roof. Seeing Altair scale





■ "Won't aggle? Look at this guy! Won't 'aggle!"



■ After 10 years of marriage to Sarah Jessica Parker, Matthew Broderick had had enough...



■ Hoodies: slightly more violent in the 12th century

buildings is a thrill in itself since he grips onto usable handholds only, forcing you to seek out achievable paths.

Once on the roof Altair sneaks up behind an unsuspecting archer and slides a knife between his shoulder blades, flinging his dying body down to the street below. Seeing one of their fellow guards drenching the cobblestones with pools of blood was understandably alarming for those nearby, allowing Altair to leap from the roof, catch a nearby beam and use it to swing over the perimeter fence completely unnoticed.

Before long Altair is set upon by a handful of guards and forced to employ his skilful swordsmanship. You can, of course, launch random attacks at your enemies whenever you want, but as Altair often faces off against dangerous adversaries you'll need to block attacks and look for openings if you plan to survive combat for long. While in the defensive stance Altair will block automatically, leaving you to focus on timing your counterattacks just right. As you counterattack you'll need to choose between head, body and leg attacks. Aim high and Altair may well drive his dagger straight into their skull, after parrying their sword thrust. A low counter, on the other hand, could see Altair sweep their blade aside and shatter their knee with a powerful kick, before driving his sword

through their belly as they writhe on the ground in agony. Although these are only a couple of examples, the complex animation system tracks everything from Altair's stance to his chosen weapon to create a vast number of unique attacks.

DEATHRACE 1191

After seeing a score of his guards slaughtered Talal wisely decides to make like a little bitch and run for his life; cue cool chase scene through the streets of Jerusalem. As Talal barges his way through pedestrians, Altair takes the higher ground, using his insanely stylish free-running skills to leap across rooftops, wall-run between gaps and swing between overhead crossbeams, sort of like an orang-utan – except instead of fur he's got a really, really sharp knife.

Talal keeps throwing back panicked glances over his shoulder as he scampers through the streets. Unfortunately they do little to help him as Altair leaps down from a nearby roof, tackles him to the ground and punches him in the face... just as the foot-long blade shoots out of Altair's custom-made wrist-sheath.

Murdering Talal in broad daylight in front of 20 witnesses has an explosive effect on the crowd. Most people flee, screaming, while others cower in fear. In seconds a handful of guards advance on Altair with their swords drawn. Altair wall-

runs to a nearby ledge and uses it to fling himself up to the roof, where he makes his escape. Altair makes his way across the rooftops significantly faster than the pursuing guards but there are far more of them, coming from multiple directions, forcing him to turn and fight. After running a couple through, and teaching others to skydive without parachutes, Altair dives into a cart of hay and waits for the heat to die down.

After walking us through this incredible demo, the Ubisoft rep passed the controller to us and our opinions soared even higher. What we assumed would be a painfully difficult game to master turned out to be one of the most intuitive we've played. In minutes we were free-running, wall-crawling, parrying and spilling blood with the best of them... So much freedom... so many stylish moves... November cannot come soon enough for this bad boy. **Narayan Pattison**

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "Assassin's Creed is the next gen game that will redefine the action genre."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ Those are mighty big words but if there's one game that can do it, this is it. And if there's two, *GTAIV* has a good shot as well.

HORSING AROUND

Ubisoft also revealed a tantalising look at the world outside the game's three cities. The countryside demo reveals lush hills dotted with small settlements. Altair's spirited horse also plays a large role. When you're holding down the run button your horse will jump over any obstacles in your path, and from horseback Altair can engage in combat with multiple foes. One swordfight saw Altair leaning out of the saddle as he delivered long, sweeping attacks. The next enemy slashed at Altair's horse, causing it to collapse abruptly under him. Altair continued the fight while his horse staggered to its feet. Interestingly your not-so-noble steed is happy kick enemies in the back that you're able to lead into range.



PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** ACTION
■ **PLAYERS:** 1-2
■ **RELEASE:** NOVEMBER 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** EA
■ **DEVELOPER:** EA REDWOOD SHORES
■ **WEB:** www.ea.com



THE SIMPSONS

The funniest game you'll play all year – two thumbs up

Considering how prolific *The Simpsons* games have been over the years it's been an agonisingly long time between drinks since 2003's *The Simpsons: Hit & Run* showed us just how much fun a simple GTA knockoff set in Springfield could be. For the new *Simpsons* game EA's left the ill-fitting 3D graphics and driving-based gameplay on the cutting room floor, and opted instead for a two-player action extravaganza with simple 2D cell shaded visuals that recreate the feel of the TV show perfectly.

The premise for *The Simpsons* is by far the best we've heard for a licensed property. Bart has stumbled across a magic videogame manual – wait, it does get better – and he, and the rest of his family, become self-aware within the game. The knowledge that they're trapped inside a videogame gives the Simpsons the ability to grant themselves all sorts of *Matrix*-style super powers.

Bart becomes Bartman – a four foot-

tall spandex-clad badass, who can use his cape to glide and his grappling hook to zip around environments. Lisa takes a more spiritual path and gets some divine intervention from Buddha. Using her Buddha skills Lisa can control a huge hand that reaches down from the clouds and builds bridges and solves other problems. Homer and Marge also appear as playable characters but their fat-themed and vacuum cleaner-orientated powers don't seem as interesting.

One of the best things about *Hit & Run* was the ability to wander around Springfield and explore your favourite landmarks. The new *Simpsons* game pushes this feature out to amazing new heights, with a graphics engine that's capable of rendering vast chunks of Springfield that are packed with detail, yet remain true to the look of the show.

In the cleverly titled 'God of Wharf' level those backstabbing killer dolphins are on the loose again and begging to

end up as canned tuna. By casually flicking them hundreds of metres with her giant god hand Lisa ensures the wharf is anything but 'Dolphin Safe'. As well as the entertaining action *The Simpsons* is also packed with laugh-out-loud jokes aimed at both fans of videogames and show. During a platforming section on the wharf we accidentally slipped into the water and drowned, only to be greeted by the fat comic book guy who moans "Worst gaming cliché ever".

A couple of other brief tastes of missions revealed a huge boss fight entitled 'Shadow of the Colossal Doughnut Man' and 'Grand Theft Scratchy', where Marge tries to get the violent game banned by leading a mob through the streets bashing anyone who doesn't join them. If the final game can maintain the sense of humour sampled in the demo then we could well finally have the *Simpsons* game we've been waiting 18 years to play. **Narayan Pattison**



WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "Our goal is to create the most original game ever, which is a lofty goal and only possible given the close collaboration with *The Simpsons* creative team."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ A little too lofty we'd say. However, there's no denying it's an amazingly fun game that does the license proud.



■ Lumberjacks: can't be trusted. Especially ones with big ass beards



MEDAL OF HOMER

As well as realising they're characters in their own videogame, the Simpson family soon discover they can travel into other famous videogames. Bart and Homer take a trip to France to enjoy a level based on EA's famous WWII shooter. It turns out those damn Frenchies are up to their old tricks again and Bart and Homer must do the dash around Paris and steal as many white flags as possible to stop the locals from surrendering to the approaching Germans.



INFO BYTE

Seamless drop-in, drop-out co-op play was all the rage at this year's E3 and we're happy to report *The Simpsons* is on the cutting edge.

SAMUEL L. JACKSON IS...

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[adult swim] 

PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** ACTION
■ **PLAYERS:** 1-2
■ **RELEASE:** NOVEMBER 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** EA
■ **DEVELOPER:** PANDEMIC
■ **WEB:** www.ea.com

■ See that big ass fire? You probably made it, with your awesome exploding powers. Yeah!



MERCENARIES 2: WORLD IN FLAMES

Talking 'bout a revolution

The E3 2007 line-up is easily the strongest in years but there were very few surprises because the biggest blockbusters have already spent the last six months revving their hype machines into overdrive. Bucking that trend in a big way was *Mercenaries 2*. As the game's generic protagonist hopped in a helicopter and began flying over a detailed but hardly spectacular cityscape we found ourselves glancing at our watch and beginning to plan out our lunch options. Then something completely unexpected happened.

Our jaws were hanging limply against our chests because the person piloting the chopper had fired a volley of missiles at a bridge and we were watching it explode and collapse, sending huge chunks of concrete splashing into the harbour. Surely this was just a cut-scene we were watching. Our doubts were silenced when the pilot flew over the shattered ruin of the bridge and opened fire on a nearby oil

rig. As the barrage of missiles slammed into the oil rig, huge explosions erupted as cranes and buildings toppled over into the ocean and the oil rig was reduced to a handful of smoking stumps. The trail of destruction continued as the chopper flew over land, blasting the crap out of random buildings, vehicles and even trees.

Our dreams of a fully destructible GTA-style open-world game had finally been answered... and *Mercenaries 2* hadn't even finished warming up yet. After running around a gas station on-foot during a gun battle with a few enemies, one particular scumbag had hidden up in the trees and was proceeding to take pot shots at the player with a sniper rifle. Calmly the player selected the grappling hook and fired it at a passing helicopter. He then quickly climbed up the grappling hook cable, opened the chopper door, grabbed the pilot and slammed his head in the door before throwing him out and climbing in. Now in control of the chopper

he flew down to the gas station, used a giant magnet to pick up an entire freaking petrol tanker. With the hulking tanker swinging below, the chopper flew up into the hills over that same pesky sniper and released the cable. The mini mushroom cloud explosion that erupted as the tanker hit the ground incinerated everything in a 100 metre radius left us with a big smile on our faces. *World in Flames* looks like the most apt game title in years and we cannot wait to throw a few more digital commies on the BBQ this November. **Narayan Pattison**

INFO BYTE

As if *Mercenaries 2* wasn't already a wet dream come true, Pandemic has also gone and confirmed two-player co-op for both split-screen and online play.

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "*Mercenaries 2: World in Flames* is an explosive open-world action game set in a massive, highly reactive, war-torn world."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ A fully destructible game environment has been at the top of our wishlist for ages. Pandemic, we want to have your babies.

DESTROYING SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL

It may have taken a few minutes after seeing the *Mercenaries 2* demo before we regained the power of speech, but the first question we asked was about exactly how detailed the destruction was. Can you take a rocket launcher and use it to tunnel through the walls of a building? Unfortunately, no. The destruction is not detailed enough to let you carve through specific walls with any precision but the engine does extend beyond a simple transition between pristine and complete obliteration. Some of the bigger buildings have up to three stages of destruction, allowing sections of the building to be blown apart while others remain intact.



■ "Freakin' commies. They tried to ban my awesome beard... now they're gonna pay"



■ Sticking it to the man: everyone's doing it these days





TAME YOUR FEROCIOUS HUNGER



PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

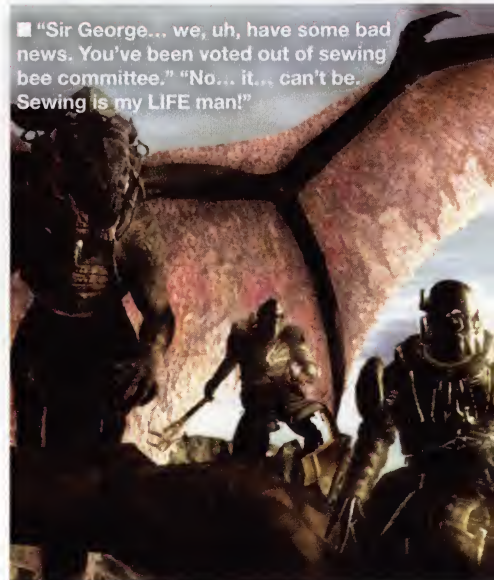
■ **GENRE:** ACTION
■ **PLAYERS:** 1
■ **RELEASE:** SEPTEMBER 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY
■ **DEVELOPER:** FACTOR 5
■ **WEB:** www.us.playstation.com/Lair



■ When Geoff the Dragon ate tandoori for breakfast, everybody paid the price.



■ "Sir George... we, uh, have some bad news. You've been voted out of sewing bee committee." "No... it... can't be. Sewing is my LIFE man!"



WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "Engage in a struggle on an epic scale as your civilization repels the onslaught of an unrelenting army."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ You had us at 'dragons'. Put some cash aside for this one – it's looking stunning.

DO A BARREL ROLL

Making fantastic use of the motion-sensing functions of the SIXAXIS controller, *Lair* allows you to guide your dragon as if you were grasping the reins of the scaly beast yourself. With a flick of the wrist, your dragon will dodge, dash and loop through the air with a grace that you wouldn't expect from a creature of its size. Using very few buttons, this very intuitive control scheme allows players to become immediately immersed in the game without the usual hindrance of grappling with a learning curve.



LAIR

Thar be dragons! No, seriously!

The beating of leathery wings and giant beasts breathing flame often reminds us that the mother-in-law is coming around for a visit, which is a bad thing. This time, however, it's a very good thing, because it signals that Sony's new dragon-riding epic, *Lair*, is almost ready to take flight.

In a very bold move, developer Factor 5 has elected to create a plot that significantly mirrors that of our own Earth, with the issue of environmental change a central theme. In the realm of *Lair*, their world is wracked with massive geothermal turmoil, with volcanoes bursting from the ground all over the planet, spewing toxic ash and molten magma and destroying everything for miles around. In the wake of this widespread global destruction, sources of fresh water and tracts of farmable land untainted by the volcanic blight are incredibly rare, making food and water pricelessly precious commodities.

In light of the crisis situation, the two peaceful civilisations of the planet are spurred towards war to battle to secure

what valuable unspoiled land remains for the survival of their people, or face extinction amidst the lava and ash.

You play the role of Rohn, a Skyguard in the Asylan army, and your story begins as political relations between the civilised Asylans and tribal Mokai break down, and a bloody war begins – the likes of which has not been seen for centuries. As one of the most talented dragon riders, you are at the forefront of the conflict, and must endure the most intense and harrowing battles firsthand.

A quick glance at the screenshots is enough to tell you just how jaw-droppingly gorgeous *Lair* is. So much so, you'll probably need corrective surgery if you stare to long. Using next gen techniques like Progressive Meshing and harnessing the power of the Cell processor, *Lair* delivers utterly staggering visuals with thousands of units as well as rich, realistic environments with unparalleled detail.

An all-encompassing dynamic physics system delivers authenticity in everything from rolling waves to the flow of each individual soldier's cloak as it flutters in the breeze.

Don't think for a moment that this is just some 'on-rails' shooter, because *Lair* is anything but. You can fly wherever you like, and even hover in place to concentrate your attacks on a stationary target or evade a pursuing foe. If the ground troops need support, you can crash down into the enemy lines, sending their forces sprawling and charring them with dragon fire. It's also worth noting that being astride an enormous dragon doesn't mean you're the biggest thing in the sky, as there are all manner of leviathan-like behemoths you'll need to best in your quest for victory.

A tale of epic scope from a developer with a reputation for getting the most out of hardware? You can already chalk *Lair* up as a must-have.

— Nick O'Shea



■ "Hmm... is it just me or is this journey beginning to 'drag-on'... get it? 'Drag-on'?" (deathly silence) "Please don't eat me"



■ Dragons: like dogs, they can't stop sniffing each other's arses

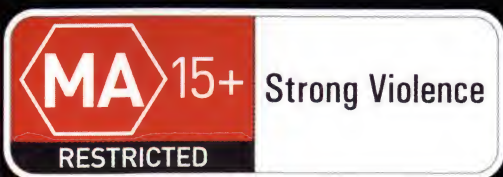


"Ninja Gaiden Sigma is the cornerstone on which all future sharp-edge fiascos will be based." 80/100
- Official Playstation Magazine



VENGEANCE. CARNAGE. DESTRUCTION. LIKE NEVER BEFORE.

NINJA GAIDEN SIGMA



PLAYSTATION 3



TECMO

eidos

PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER
■ **PLAYERS:** 1-32 (ONLINE)
■ **RELEASE:** JANUARY 2008
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** THQ
■ **DEVELOPER:** THQ STUDIO OZ
■ **WEB:** www.frontlinesgame.com



■ That's either a really small tank, or a really big soldier...



■ "YEAH! GET SOME! GET SOME! YEEHA!" "Uh Captain, that's a bird, not a jet, you've got the scope the wrong way around"

FRONTLINES: FUEL OF WAR

You will be addicted. Oh, yes. You will be

Crisis! While *Resistance* is a bit of fun online and *The Darkness* is a wickedly atmospheric creep-fest, there's currently no shooter on PS3 capable of causing an everyday man to whittle away into a pad-and-gun recluse, missing meals, not showering, and treating work as a distraction. That's all set to change in the upcoming months though as the PS3 gears up for a windfall of online-focused first-person shooters – the genre that along with the RPG – has leeched countless hours off otherwise productive people. *The Orange Box* will touchdown with *Half-Life 2* and *Team Fortress 2*, there'll be *Battlefield: Bad Company*, *Call of Duty 4*, *Medal of Honor Airborne* and eventually *Quake Wars: Enemy Territory*. That's a lot of sure-fire multiplayer madness right there and then, but one game could, potentially, rise up and eclipse them all.

Frontlines: Fuel of War is the first game by Kaos Studios (although the PS3 version is being developed in Brisbane), whose core founders were the gurus behind the online phenomenon that was the Desert Combat mod for *Battlefield 1942* on PC. Later it made a big contribution towards the frenzy that was *Battlefield 2*, in the process raising its status from one-time wonders to online shooting sage. Now it's got its

own project and team, and is looking to produce something very special for console owners craving adrenaline-charged online warfare smothered with tanks, jeeps, choppers and jets that can be piloted and co-ordinated along with the rest of your team on the map.

Recently OPS flew over to split some Manhattan pizza with Kaos Studios in its rapidly filling New York premises and see how it's going with *Frontlines: Fuel of War*. In short, we liked.

While there are no tea and strumpets awarded for guessing that multiplayer mayhem features heavily in this game, surprisingly just as much attention has been given to a fleshed out single-player experience. Set 20 years in the future, the world is enduring an energy crisis of global proportions that has spurred and spurred several bloody conflicts. Two factions rise from the embers; the Western Coalition (made up of the usual US/European chums) and the Red Star Alliance (ye olde Russian-Chinese tag team). Before long they start regular bouts of heavy-duty rumbling over the remaining energy resources, sparking all manner of apocalyptic fears – fire and brimstone, seas of corpses, myspace and facebook merging together – you get the idea.

A nice change of pace, however, is that the story is not viewed from the

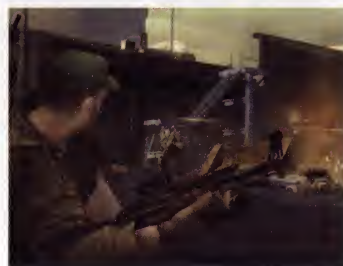
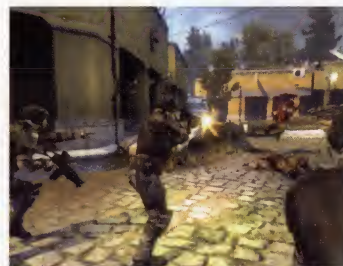
perspective of a soldier, but rather a journalist stationed on the frontline. The single-player demo we saw featured the journalist hanging with some US/EU soldiers in a chopper until it was hit by an RPG and went down like a geriatric trying to run the four-minute mile. With a few of the crew dead and the site surrounded by bastard reds, the journalist is forced to team up with the remaining soldiers and blow away any and all ground bogies. After the initial batch of reds was dealt with, it became apparent that Kaos is completely dedicated to crafting an open combat arena. Like in the *Battlefield* games, there's no sign of linear level design at all. Instead you're plonked into a stretched landscape with mission-critical points scattered throughout. *Frontlines* connects these points together to form a – you got it in one – frontline that the player must advance to and secure. When

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "The game focuses on the cutting-edge in military technology that will allow players to experience the highly-charged frontlines of tomorrow, today"

WHAT WE SAY:

■ It might not have a recognisable brand or characters, but *Frontlines* is ticking all our boxes.



INFO BYTE

Apparently including Australia in the mix was all a bit too political, with the designers citing that Australia wouldn't be involved in an energy war because – well – we've got plenty down under.

■ "Low on rations... surrounded by the enemy... and I really need to take a slash..."

that's done, a new frontline is identified further ahead. In the case of the above demo, the player had to move through the initial area on foot, but after the frontline was won, a second wider space opened up that demanded the use of tanks and jeeps. This will allow players to devise their own strategies to execute, and add variety into each mission by changing the conditions surrounding each frontline.

And then there's the game's multiplayer – the focal point of our excitement really, and the element where *Frontlines*' assault on the market will either be won or lost. It features massive maps with scores of soldiers rallying for

control over each progressive frontline using field equipment and killer war machines. Now add to that upgradeable character roles that affect how you play and the strong possibility that the game will support battles of up to 32 players. Sorry, we better repeat that last nugget of info: 32 players! Compare that to *Quake Wars: ET*, with support for 16 and you can see that comparatively *Frontlines* will feel like an epic world war in comparison.

We got a chance to experience using the various roles in a LAN match. The Air Support role, for instance, allows you to order in pinpoint missile drops on any location or target you can see

on the map. We had particular fun with this class when we were involved in an impossible duel with a tank. Ordinarily a lone soldier would've stood no chance, but we managed to crouch down behind some cover and call in an air strike that obliterated the tank with the precision of a celebrity surgeon.

We could harp on for pages and pages about *Frontlines: Fuel of War*, but we'll save other aspects of the game, like the use of the stunning Unreal Engine 3, or the cunning AI for later coverage. Just keep watching this space. The hunt for the PS3's best online shooter is just heating up. **James Ellis**

CHATTING WITH THE WAR CHIEF

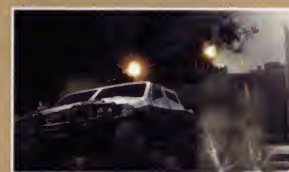
We chewed the fat with the game's Senior Producer, Joe Halper.

OPS: *Frontlines* looks similar to a bunch of other games coming down the pipeline. How much do other games affect your design decisions?

Joe: We're aware that there are a lot of other great games out there. Your *Battlefields*, *Call of Duty*, *Enemy Territory*. We consider *Frontlines* to be a combination of *Battlefield* with a big open world but it has the cinematic quality of *Call of Duty*.

OPS: Where do you draw the line between arcade fun and accessibility?

Joe: Yeah, that's the hardest thing, right? The casual gamers are the ones you want but you also want it to appeal to the hardcore fans. Usually you find them on the PC base but there are more casual gamers on console, so we've done a lot so anyone can hop into the game and play it right away.



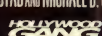
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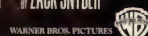
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PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** HORROR FPS
■ **PLAYERS:** TBC
■ **RELEASE:** SEPTEMBER 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** ATARI
■ **DEVELOPER:** CODEMASTERS
■ **WEB:** www.codemasters.com/jericho



■ Hell: it's *really* hot down there. God wasn't bullshitting

CLIVE BARKER'S JERICO

It's time to turn out the lights, Barker's back baby!

It's easy to be cynical when you hear a famous writer is being involved with a game. After all, how much time do you reckon Tom Clancy spent telling Ubisoft where to put the sticky shockers in *Splinter Cell*?

However, there are times, and we think we might be looking at one now, when the perfect blend of creator and creation takes place. A synthesis 'twixt horror/dark fantasy genius Clive (*Hellraiser*, *The Books of Blood*, *The Great and Secret Show*) Barker and Codemasters has been born and the developers seem

only too happy to let the man's fevered imagination weave its magic.

With *Jericho*, Barker seems to harken back to his horror roots. There's a lot more of *Hellraiser* in this than *Imajica* and that can only be a good thing.

So, what's the game like? Okay, it's a first-person shooter... hey! Don't roll your eyes. There's more. We can't give away certain specific plot points (at the developer's request) but we can tell you – you're part of seven-person team that seems to specialise in occult shenanigans. Imagine the Ghostbusters but dressed like a bunch of Goths.

Anyway, you start out as a character with no magic powers. Just a gun. Admittedly it's a cool gun: equipped as it is with rapid fire and shotgun blast but other team members have rail guns or magic blood spells they can cast. Why can't you be them?

The thing is, you can. After um... an incident we can't actually go into you become non-corporeal. Your body has buggered off to the great beyond (or down the shops to play the pokies, we don't know) and you can now body hop from team member to team member. You want to be the cute chick that carves up her hands and creates magic balls? Done. You want to be the cat with the rail gun? Done. You want to be the mage-type fellow... oh look, you get the idea. Sometimes the squad splits and you'll only have the option of a certain number of team members, but really – body hopping is a really cool addition to a game that's already looking pretty sweet.

Graphically the monsters and environments are beautifully disgusting. One of the bosses we saw was a hideously obese fat man-thing, hanging from ceiling rails that could move. This fat, grotesque mess would open its stomach and try to drench you in its acidic blood. Oh yes, this is Barker at his darkest – make no mistake.

There're still a few niggles and glitches to be ironed out – but we're pretty confident that when *Clive Barker's Jericho* comes out it will fill the shooty/horror hole that *The Darkness* will have left. Believe us when we tell you we're watching this puppy closely. **Anthony O'Connor**

WHAT THEY SAY:

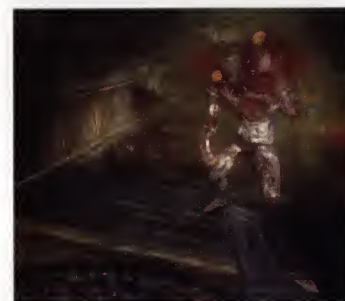
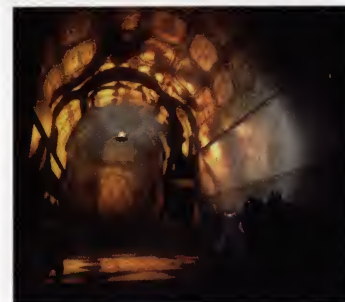
■ "It promises to be the most spectacular, creative and unflinching realisation of a Clive Barker nightmare that will drag players in kicking and screaming."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ Cool monsters, cool weapons, cool magic. If they manage to capture the mood of Barker's work, this could be the business.

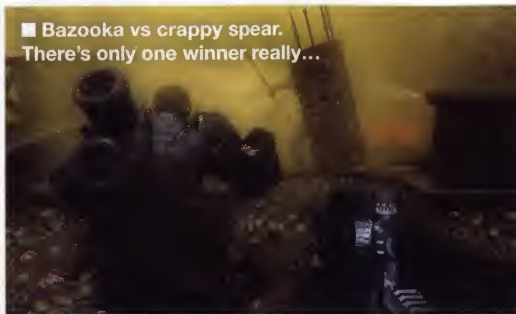


■ "Hey baby, wanna get busy?"
"What the hey, I'm not fussy"

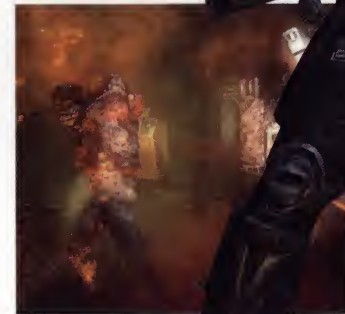


DARKER BARKER

Just to give you an idea of the level of horror Barker brings, let's have a word from his most iconic creation: Pinhead. Said to a victim: "Down the dark decades of your pain, this will seem like a memory of Heaven." FYI: this is NOT a good ice breaker at parties nor do chicks dig it as a pick up line. It is damn creepy though. Gotta love Pinhead. Fingers crossed that *Jericho* brings the pain.



■ Bazooka vs crappy spear.
There's only one winner really...



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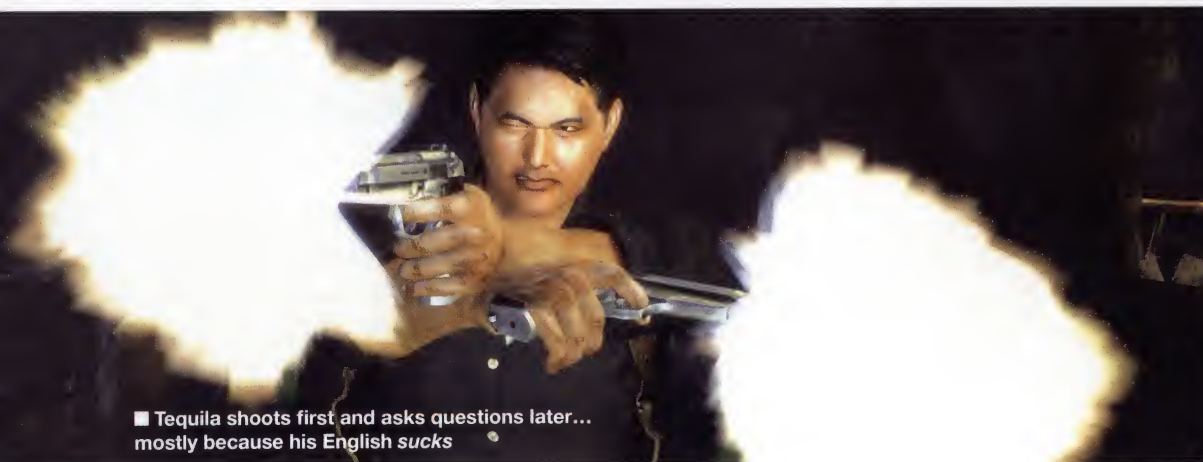
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PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** ACTION
■ **PLAYERS:** 1 (TBC)
■ **RELEASE:** SEPTEMBER 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** RED ANT
■ **DEVELOPER:** MIDWAY CHICAGO
■ **WEB:** www.midway.com



■ "Who are you, man?" "I'm the panty pooper – shit I mean 'party pooper'. Dammit, I always get that wrong..."



■ Tequila shoots first and asks questions later... mostly because his English sucks

STRANGLEHOLD

We lock and load for another round of John Woo's bullet ballet

We've been writing about *Stranglehold* a fair bit lately – mostly because, in the absence of a *Max Payne 3*, *Stranglehold* is as close as we'll get to another instalment of the grizzly series.

The similarities are more than superficial – something you'll immediately realise the moment you get your hands on it come September. Just like *Max Payne*, *Stranglehold*'s Tequila dives through the air in glorious slow-motion dealing dual-fisted justice as he sails sideways. Just like *Max Payne*, individually rendered bullets rip through the air, slicing through scenery and skin alike. Just like *Max Payne*, *Stranglehold* is all your trigger-happy, hard-boiled cop revenge fantasies rolled into one.

No doubt *Max Payne* lifted a significant proportion of inspiration from Hong Kong flicks by John Woo and his peers, but *Stranglehold* is definitely a 'familiar' experience.

Of course, this isn't a bad thing. *Max Payne* was a great game. The sequel

lost the plot a little, but the original was a blast. What harm is more of a good thing? None, really – which is perhaps why we're leaving *Stranglehold* on our radar.

Tequila Time, *Stranglehold*'s (trademarked) answer to Bullet Time, allows you to fill your unlucky opponents with so much lead they'll be using their todger as a pencil (to fill out their death certificate, presumably). It certainly allows for some riotous (and absurdly violent) fun. As time crawls you can unload shell after shell into an expired goon – and thanks to the ragdoll physics you can do so to the point where you can juggle them in mid-air with buckshot. On one occasion we drove an assailant dangling from a rope across five metres of open air and over a second-storey balcony with the force of a shotgun. On another we pinned one poor chap against the wall under the withering fire from our dual-SMGs – he just couldn't collapse due to the sheer amount of slugs being delivered point blank. Each impact is accompanied with a fleshy squelch that's both awful

and satisfying (they ARE bad guys, after all). The game is definitely at its best in super slo-motion, and we sincerely hope Midway don't make the mistake of limiting its use too severely.

The railing-balancing, gun-diving, trolley riding, table-hopping shenanigans didn't always prove to be quite as intuitive as we'd hoped – either we just weren't dexterous enough or it was a symptom of the code we were playing (which, admittedly, was a few months old) – but the potential after some polish is clear.

We'll have the full, final verdict soon.

♣ **Luke Reilly**

INFO BYTE

The Australian version of *Stranglehold* will not come with the prequel film *Hard Boiled* on the disc as previously reported, most probably due to some sort of local licensing issue.

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "Stranglehold allows gamers to play a John Woo-directed action blockbuster movie..."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ A rollicking oriental bloodbath – perhaps the most unashamed *Max Payne* rip-off yet, and a decent looking one to boot. And what's wrong with that?

RIGHT IN THE MUMMY DADDY BUTTON

The nut shot. A timeless comedy classic. Does anyone else recall how *Medal of Honor Frontline* would keep track of groin shots? Just us? Oh... *Stranglehold* is an homage to the nut shot and all the excruciating hilarity it has to offer. Even the most ardent third-person shooter phobes would be hard pressed to not crack a smile at *Stranglehold*'s slo-mo, bullet-tracking, right-in-the-penis special-kills. In fact, if we had our way we probably would have based the entire preview on it. But common sense and good taste prevailed. To its credit, it didn't get any less funny for the duration of the demo (and we did it A LOT).



■ "Eat LEAD bitches!" "We don't want to! We might get lead poisoning!"





■ "You don't look anything like your MySpace pic"



PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** ACTION
■ **PLAYERS:** 1
■ **RELEASE:** FEBRUARY 2008
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** THQ
■ **DEVELOPER:** NIHILISTIC SOFTWARE
■ **WEB:** www.nihilistic.com

CONAN

The legendary meatball of muscle gets set to crack heads and maul ladies

There was a scene in one of the early *Conan* flicks where everyone's fave Governorator is captured and treated like a lab rat by a bunch of inquisitive sods. Rather than shock our brainless granite-jawed hero with magic or instigate a primitive round of Chinese water torture they instead throw a defenceless pheromone-laced she-spunk into his cage. She was a stunning lass with chest puddings like the Watergate scandal – uncovered. If you'd watched this scene as a boy, as most of us here at *OPS* did, the memory of what transpired would still be etched into your memory. That being when Conan, the Austrian bodybuilder, holds the woman down and gives her a thorough going over (off screen, thankfully). Does he get away with this? Absolutely. He is, after all, Conan.

It's promised there will be much of the above attitude built into the character of Conan in THQ's upcoming third-person meat grinder, even though 'derh ist nau Arnhuld in dis'. Nope, the game is firmly based on the original comic book series. Fortunately, *OPS* recently got to play a snazzy little early build of *Conan* to get a feel for how it's shaping up.

Currently the combat scores two

thumbs up in terms of gory bliss, employing variety rather than hack-n-slash foolery. Drawing inspiration from the *God of War* series, Conan can roll, block, counter attack, string together an evolving set of over 100 powerful moves, and pick up just about anything to chuck at his foes. In fact while Kratos was limited to the few weapons gifted him during his adventure, Conan can actually pick up and use the weapons of downed enemies to skewer them like one of your Uncle Lofty's seafood BBQ sticks.

The standout feature of the game so far, though, is the visual assault it volleys onto the senses. While we're not sure if the following gore will make it past our sterilisers, Conan can use his trusty weaponry to butcher his foes in ways that would make a sausage maker cringe. For one, you can slice right through an enemy both vertically and horizontally then watch their innards spill onto the ground like shrimp out of a fishing net. Limbs can also be hacked off enemies, and rather than instantly vanishing, they roll about on the ground like tumbleweeds.

Despite some story details remaining unknown, from what we played it's a shoo-in Conan will have plenty of

motivation to see his quest through.

During one level we diced our way through a bunch of bone-sniffers to find a sultry hot mamma – with her baps jiggling freely in the wind no less – bound to a post in some filthy pig's village. Our minds harkening back to that infamous coming of age scene mentioned earlier, but we opted to do the right thing and free the poor lass before she told us that a whole gamut of lovely topless ladies – like herself – were being slaughtered by dirty vermin down the road. We ask you: what better incentive is there for a young gamer to hack onwards than the prospect of saving a bevy of semi-naked babes? Look for *Conan* to crunch all competition early next year. ♣ James Ellis

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "It harnesses next generation hardware to deliver a cinematic gameplay experience and to capture the essence of the *Conan* universe."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ While it may not top *God of War*, *Conan* might just be the next best thing for some time – plus it'll be on PS3!



■ "What's best in life, Conan?" "To crush your enemies, see them driven before you, oh – and those sprinkley things you put on ice cream"

GIVING MEANING BEHIND CONAN

We managed to catch up with Robert Huebner, president and project director of Nihilistic Software to chat about *Conan*.

OPS: What's the main edge *Conan* has over *Ninja Gaiden*, *God of War*, or any of those other killer titles?

Robert: They're both great games. What we want to do is combine the things we like best about both games. We'd like to have the same or better standard of animation and cinematic presentation of *God of War* along with the intricate fighting mechanics of *Ninja Gaiden*. We have a stun mechanic, parrying, parry counter moves – it's a deep combat system.

OPS: Were there any difficulties in implementing that complex combat system?

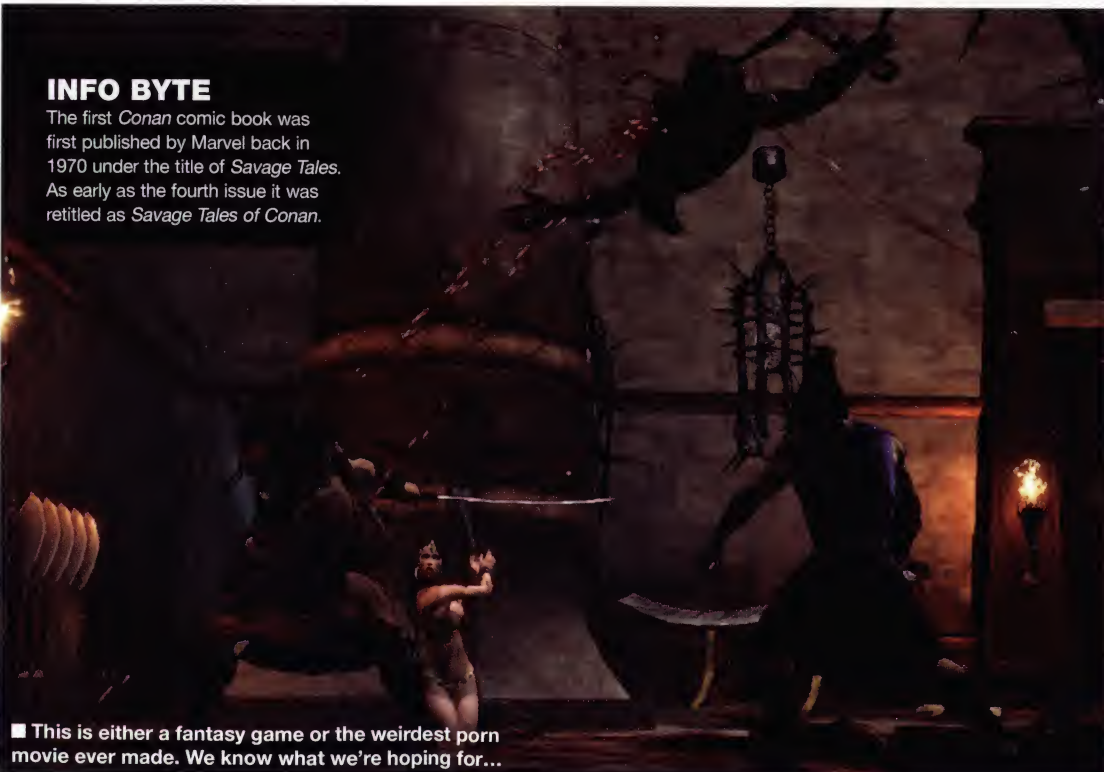
Robert: There are always difficulties related to animations – particularly grappling opponents of different sizes. But it's worth it, I think. It's kind of like in the WWE stuff, the grapple moves are what makes the game fun.

OPS: Will there be any reward for varying your attacks?

Robert: Conan has a rage meter that builds up during combat that he can then unleash to go on a bit of a killing spree. Blocking enemy attacks and retaliating with a variety of combos will actually fill the rage meter up quite quickly, so there's quite a bit of incentive there.

INFO BYTE

The first *Conan* comic book was first published by Marvel back in 1970 under the title of *Savage Tales*. As early as the fourth issue it was retitled as *Savage Tales of Conan*.



■ This is either a fantasy game or the weirdest porn movie ever made. We know what we're hoping for...

PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** SPORTS
■ **PLAYERS:** 1-6
■ **RELEASE:** SUMMER 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** ATARI
■ **DEVELOPER:** KONAMI
■ **WEB:** www.atari.com.au



■ "Just-a one Cornetto... geeve eet to meee"

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2008

The king is coming...

We have beef with Konami. Major beef. It's not because it's the brains behind the greatest soccer franchise ever conceived, or because it's planning to release a fully laced and primed PlayStation 3 version of *Pro Evolution* that'll ignite another wave of *Evo* addicts like napalm on an oil slick. It's because we don't have the game now. **RIGHT NOW!**

For those who miraculously still haven't cottoned on to the brilliance of *Pro Evolution*, it's best described as the purest form of the sport manifest electronic, an icon of deft design the likes of which EA's *FIFA* constantly tries to emulate. Brilliant passing and ball physics combine with fluid runs and tough AI to convert true patriots of the game.

In *PES 2008* series father Shingo 'Seabass' Takatsuka is chartering in a new game element to move *PES 2008* even closer to perfection. Titled Teamvision, it revamps the computer's soccer brain, and is now able to counter human strategy with tailored attacks of their own. Potentially this means that if you're prone to passing the ball out

wide and hammering the flanks the AI will adjust its strategy to buffer up the wings and then either counter through the middle or switch it to the other side of the park. It now seems that players will no longer be able to rely on one overall park strategy. Get ready to google football strategies chumps.

And that's not all. There'll also be improvements to set pieces, allowing for a greater variety of moves to be used during the match so you can utilise the specialist skills of all your players – and we're not exclusively talking about offence. Defending free kicks now means you'll be able to slide your wall into the desired position.

Of great interest is the promise that players on the ball will now be given greater control to try to pull defender's pants down and skip past them to glory. Given the series is known for encouraging needlepoint passing over flashing pirouettes it'll be interesting to see how such wizardry is integrated.

Despite all the praise, *Pro Evo* has been a constant runner up to *FIFA* in a couple of categories. Firstly it's always

had fewer licensed teams, leagues and divisions. Secondly it hasn't been able to match the vibrancy of *FIFA*'s pomp look. This point is something *PES 2008* has hopes of remedying this time around, promising full facial animation for all players as well as a greater range and depth to the animation.

So yes, we're hungry for *PES 2008*. The idea of getting a swanky new PS3 version, complete with eye-cutting definition, more options, and better AI, leaves us mashed in a barmy ball. Have we mentioned we want this game now?

■ **James Ellis**

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "The movement of players off the ball, coupled with the total control given to the player, creates the closest simulation of real football to date."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ Unless EA has paid off Solid Snake to spy on Konami, we can't see anything stopping *PES 2008* from retaining its soccer crown.



■ "Yes, and tonight should be a real clash of the titans, a real epic. What do you think Trevor?" "Um the match finished five hours ago Jim" "Shit..."



■ Is it just us, or does that Brazilian guy look like some enormous ogre man?



INFO BYTE

Old Seabass recently admitted that *PES*'s lack of licenses was a shortcoming he'd love to remedy. Hopefully we'll soon stop having to select teams like London Red...

TALKING BALLS

Apart from restricting *PES 2008* to merely playing the beautiful game, a few screenshots released by Konami show you may get the opportunity to play the haggard media and witness the usual post-match microphone bollocks. We're not sure if you'll be able to interact with the media and select from various attitudes to display, but our fingers are crossed. Just imagine if you could take it one step further and select classic players like Diego "Sherbet nose" Maradona and "Limp-third-legged" Pele as they pimp out just how great they are to the world.





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PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** ACTION
■ **PLAYERS:** 1-2
■ **RELEASE:** OCTOBER 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** ACTIVISION
■ **DEVELOPER:** NEXT LEVEL GAMES
■ **WEB:** www.activision.com



■ Let's face facts: the green goblin looks like a little bitch here

SPIDER-MAN: FRIEND OR FOE

If you can't beat them, join them

You cannot keep a good console down. While the Xbox was kicked to the curb faster than a pee-happy pooch caught plastering your pants, developers are still pumping out quality PS2 games eight years after its launch, with no end in sight.

One such upcoming corker is Activision's latest reworking of the successful *Spider-Man* license, *Spider-Man: Friend or Foe*. In what looks like being the biggest Spidey blockbuster yet, Activision has expertly combined one of the world's biggest licenses with the kid-friendly co-op of *LEGO Star Wars*, the stylish combat of *God of War* and the stat-building shenanigans of *Marvel: Ultimate Alliance*. We defy you to find another game out there with more bankable bullet points ticked off.

BEATING FOR THE OTHER TEAM

So, why are Spidey's enemies fighting

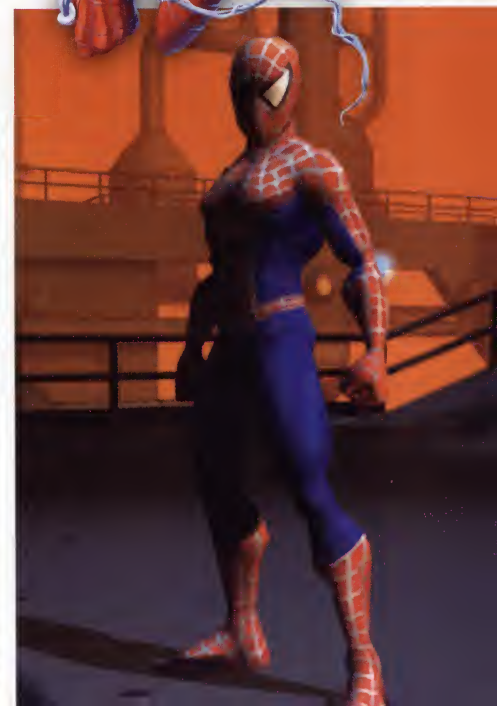
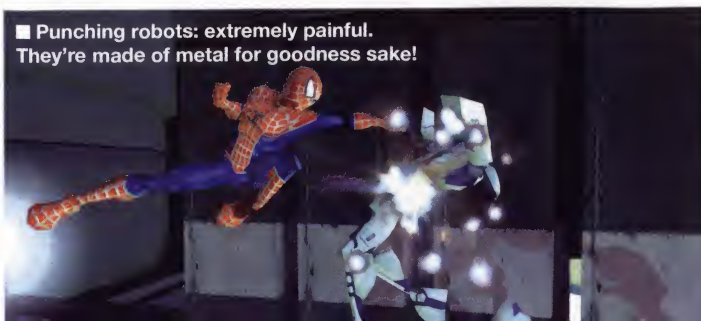
alongside him as sidekicks in *Friend or Foe*? That's a good question. And, frankly, one that the game, so far, fails to come close to providing an answer for.

Friend or Foe opens with an all-out brawl between Spidey and his most fearsome villains. We see Spidey somersaulting around Doc Ock's mechanical arms, dodging Green Goblin's razor bombs, then using a webline to sling the bombs into Sandman's chest, before delivering a devastating uppercut to a pouncing Venom. Spidey can't just web up the nasties to the nearest

lamppost, call the police and give himself a pat on the back though, because right at that moment a swarm of weird court jester-themed aliens appear on the rooftop and begin teleporting away with all of Spidey's nemeses.

If you're a little confused at this point, don't worry – so were we. Unfortunately the handful of cut-scenes and mission sections we saw did little to shed light on the quirky plot. From what we can gather there's an alien menace (with questionable dress sense) trying to take over the world and it's using special amulets to get

■ **Punching robots: extremely painful.**
They're made of metal for goodness sake!





■ Venom came a close second to Jamie Oliver in the 'world's biggest tongue' competition...



■ "Spider-Man, watch me punching this robot in the face! Spider-Man... you weren't watching!"

Spidey's foes to do its bidding.

At the end of each level Spidey will have a showdown with one of his many famous villains. After kicking their spandex-clad arse all over the joint, then smashing their amulet and returning them to their senses, the villains inexplicably decide to join-up and fight alongside Spidey as his sidekick... rather than running off and looting the city amidst the chaos (they are evil, remember).

BIFFO WITH BUDDIES

Quite why Venom and the rest are content to bumble along as Spidey's bitches may never be explained but it's hardly worth getting your panties in a twist over because the bottom line is it sets the stage for some superb two-player co-op action in a game perfectly suited to it.

Spider-Man and Venom make a formidable duo as they pound their way through the alien henchmen. Spidey's the more acrobatic of the pair, and has no trouble dancing around his enemies before smacking them into the air, leaping up after them and webbing them in for a *God of War*-style mid-air pummelling. Venom, on the other hand, prefers brute strength. He delivers devastating damage with melee attacks and can easily rip up large parts of the scenery and use them to flatten enemies with.

The more you delve into *Friend or*

Foe's combat the more depth you'll discover. See an explosive barrel on the far side of the room? Snap a webline onto it and you can zip it across the room into your hands and make a Molotov cocktail out of it. Surrounded by enemies? Venom can turn the tide of the fight in an instant by using the offensive capabilities of his symbiote suit to send razor sharp spikes snaking out in every direction.

As Spidey progresses through the game he'll defeat numerous Marvel characters, who then become playable. One boss encounter we saw previewed took place in a stunning recreation of Doc Ock's apartment (as seen in *Spider-Man 2*). Ock's fusion reactor was in meltdown mode during the battle, so it was sucking all of the room's contents into its artificial black hole. By employing *Dodgeball's* patented 'Five Ds: dip, duck, dodge, dive and... er... dodge' to evade the computer equipment and furniture whizzing by our heads we were able to pepper Doc Ock with web attacks and coax him into leaving his equipment so we could finish him off with a barrage of combos.

CAMEO CHAOS

As well as Venom and Doc Ock (or The Big Tentacle as he prefers to be called) a horde of other Marvel stars are playable. Sandman can dust enemies with lethal sandstorms or mutilate them by turning

his hands into freakin' huge spikey balls. The Green Goblin also gets in on the action with his razor bombs and a weird lightning storm attack (don't remember that one). Other big-name comic book characters tipped to be appearing include The Rhino, Green Goblin Junior, crime-fighting Kung Fu champ Iron Fist and Spidey's black-suited alter ego.

While it may not boldly go where no game has gone before, *Spider-Man: Friend or Foe* uses the well-loved web-slinger and his buddies to create a rollicking rollercoaster of colourful co-op combat. Best of all, the fun sense of humour and deep combat system enables grown-ups to actually enjoy battling beside the youngsters. *Friend or Foe's* a babysitter you can get your hands all over without risking a divorce. Genius.

♫ Narayan Pattison

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "Throughout the game's original story and thrilling battles, fans control Spider-Man and one of numerous Super Hero or Super Villain sidekicks"

WHAT WE SAY:

■ A clever use of the *Spider-Man* license that could be worth a swing. It's also a great sign that PS2 owners can expect a lot more than pissweak ports of PS3 games.

DOUBLE TROUBLE

While *Spider-Man: Friend or Foe* is a great way to engage in healthy two-player competitive antics, there have also been plenty of highly questionably man-on-man sports over the years. Here are some of the highlights.



Doubles skiing

Wearing matching outfits, down to the yellow booties, is never cool – especially when your professional position is squatting behind another man's arse.



Male pair skating

Giving a bloke a lift; acceptable when it's in your Holden – not cool when it's holding them up by their love spuds. No gold medal's worth that.



Wrestling

Ever wondered why people call losing their job 'getting sacked'? Word to the wise, do not ask your boss to demonstrate. Ever.

PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** RACING
■ **PLAYERS:** 1-4 (1-8 ONLINE)
■ **RELEASE:** TBC
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY
■ **DEVELOPER:** CLIMAX STUDIOS
■ **WEB:** www.climaxgroup.com



■ "Use the red shell! Whoops I forgot this is real life, not Mario Kart..."

ATV OFFROAD FURY 4

Redneck city here we come! Yeeeeee-hawww!

ATV Offroad Fury 4 reminds us of those late night warehouse ads that you can hear echoing in your dreams after you fall asleep on the couch with the TV on. You know the ones where there's a guy with some devil voice growling, "We've got shoes with laces, shoes with no laces, shoes that go on your hands, shoes that aren't shoes at all..." In other words, they've got it ALL!

It's a similar flooding with AOF4. ATVs, bikes, buggies, and trucks all feature in what is likely to be the grand finale ATV game for PS2. Supercross, Motorcross, P2P – they're all here and more. Of particular sweetness is the ability to mix and match vehicle types during long cross-country races to create a very *MotorStorm*-esque experience, albeit not with the next gen thrills and without any sort of boost ability to make your hairs stand on end. Not all the vehicle types can mess up their mudflaps across every single event, of course, as a few of the events are specific to ATVs and bikes (which are still the focus of the game).

Options, too, are well covered, particularly the multiplayer that features online support as well as split-screen support for two players.

The most addictive nuance of the series – the preloading – has remained perfectly intact here as well. For those who don't know preloading involves holding down the analogue stick to load up the suspension then rip it forward as you fly off a jump for extra height. Savvy players who prefer pulling tricks over racing (and don't we all?) will be able to kick off major point harvesters by popping a wheelie into a preload, hurtling into the air and performing a few simple air stunts, then landing into a endo.

It's all very rock and roll, of course, all very bad boy and dangerous. So what better way to ramp up the danger (pun so intended) than to slap on a 30-song strong soundtrack full of squealing guitars

and burning vocals from some of the big names in rock music? Crunching ear heaters from the likes of Audioslave, 30 Seconds to Mars and Alkaline Trio all contribute a tune along with a host of others. Thankfully, if you're of the view that Mr. Leto should stick with acting then you can mosey into the options menu and ensure his digitised crackle doesn't pickle your speakers.

So, there are options aplenty along with every offroad event any man that believes in hair on the chest is entitled to indulge in. Based on past releases it shouldn't be a far cry to suggest developer Climax Studios will improve the package as a whole, giving us a final filthy little mud squall for PS2. **James Ellis**

BUT YOU STILL WANT MORE?

AOF4 has it. Apart from the intimidating amount of stuff mentioned already, gamers who snap this up will also be privy to a story mode as they train a rookie up to the professional circuit. There'll be sweat, there'll be tears, there'll be FMV. To top that off (if you need more than a paltry 72 tracks to master and race across), the game will also include an improved track editor so you can carve out your own supercross and circuit tracks.



WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "ATV Offroad Fury 4 is ready to deliver the most competitive and comprehensive offroad racing experience available."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ This'll be an exhaustive blend of dirt-spewing racing and stunt action that'll control sweetly and have a mountainous amount of content.



■ Jesus: is there anything he *can't* do?



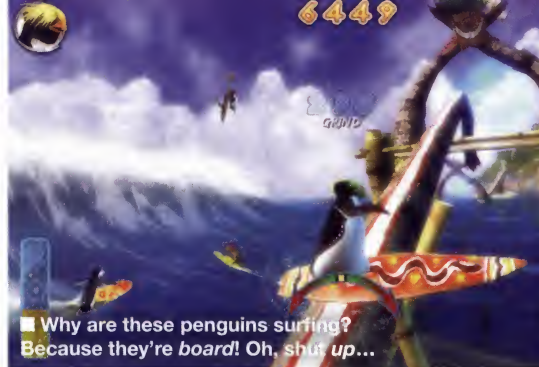
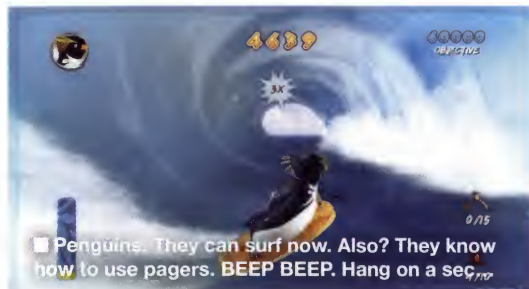
■ "This orange theme isn't working. I gotta change RIGHT NOW!"



■ ATV menage a tois – just as awkward as it sounds

INFO BYTE

AOF4 will be fully cross compatible with the PSP version *ATV Offroad Fury Pro*, allowing players to share customised tracks, vehicle upgrades and exchanges, and access to online communities.



SURF'S UP

Hang fin with the latest movie-to-game dollar press

Breaking news: investing in a CGI movie-to-game conversion just became the best investment outside of purchasing a casino. Since *Cars* came out last year and caused a noticeable increase in our nation's rate of inflation, publishers have wised up to the goodies such quick conversions can yield. Like mansions full of drunk busty college girls, cars that cost more than your house, shrouds from Turin... that sort of stuff.

Surf's Up is next. We're not happy about those Hollywood mutts copying the domestically produced *Happy Feet* with another CGI penguin film so shortly afterwards, but we'll acknowledge that a surfing game for kids isn't a *bad* idea.

We've played an early copy here at OPS and have lived to tell the tale – mostly because the game is aimed less at

the combo-centric *Hawk-olytes* and more at young kids wanting a simple game to splash around with. That's smart to us.

Basically after selecting your preferred surfer from the animal kingdom players will be thrust out onto a burgeoning wave they can cut loose on as they snare air and perform a number of tricks to boost their energy meter. The meter can be saved to its maximum to access Stoke mode (and yield mad points). Grinding and combination tricks also exist to fill out the instruction manual and add some meat to the otherwise lean bone.

It's not Masters level econometrics and the game isn't done yet, but it may provide a decent distraction for the kiddies that you'll be able to whack into their paws after they cut sick out of the flick. **James Ellis**

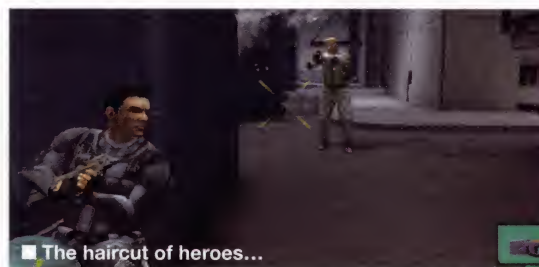


WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "...experience the rush and thrills of surfing in exotic surf spots around Pen Gu Island and rip it up and play as one of 10 characters from the film."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ Don't expect a game for all ages as it's aimed at kids. So far, though, it's ticking all the necessary boxes.



SYPHON FILTER: DARK MIRROR

Use guns to kill bad guys and save the world. We kid you not

We can hear the eyes rolling. "Another shooter?" they silently ask. Yes, but be not afraid people, this is after all *Syphon Filter*, one of the stalwarts of the console and a port of the sock-rocking PSP actioneer of the same name. *Dark Mirror* is one of the best games on PSP, so giving it an additional analogue stick should only make it better.

As you'd expect, *Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror* is all about free flowing gunplay with a little bit of platforming and puzzle solving thrown in for pity's sake. A pure third-person shooter, the camera sits quite low over your shoulder to make it easy to pop caps, explosive grenades, and electric charges up and into all the

slimy two-bit bastards threatening the free world. Additionally there's also a portly selection of *Metal Gear*-esque gadgets and gizmos, like vision goggles, for you to use on your quest.

We had particular fun utilising the sharpened cover system that allows Gabe to crouch behind cover and pop out to knock off assailants. It's been done in umpteen games before, but when this mechanic is done well it doesn't stop being awesomely fun.

You can also expect some slick multiplayer modes for use over the PlayStation Network when this game hits shelves towards the end of the year. Sweet deal. **James Ellis**



WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "...the most exciting episode yet in the *Syphon Filter* franchise – with an all-new story, new weapons and Gabe Logan firmly in control."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ It won't send players into a fit of carnality as they scramble to stores, but it should be a robust little gun romp.

PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

- GENRE: SPORT
- PLAYERS: 1-2
- RELEASE: JULY 2007
- DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
- DEVELOPER: UBISOFT
- WEB: www.surfsupgame.uk.ubi.com

PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

- GENRE: ACTION
- PLAYERS: 1 (1-8 ONLINE)
- RELEASE: LATE 2007
- DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
- DEVELOPER: SONY
- WEB: www.us.playstation.com

PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** FIGHTING
■ **PLAYERS:** 1-2
■ **RELEASE:** NOVEMBER 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** UBISOFT
■ **DEVELOPER:** CYBERCONNECT2
■ **WEB:** www.namcobandai.com



■ Little girls are his weakness (oh, that's terrible...)



■ It doesn't get much more Japanese than *Naruto*. Except vending machines for used panties



NARUTO: ULTIMATE NINJA HEROES

What's in a name?

Before starting this illustrious preview we would like commend *Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Heroes* on its stupendously manly name. By combining the words 'Ultimate', 'Ninja', and 'Heroes' Namco-Bandai has created a name that could make even those last beacons of masculinity Jack Bauer, Kratos and Chuck Norris rise to their feet and start a spontaneous slow hand clap. Ultimate... Ninja... Heroes... just typing the name, or mouthing it silently, puts hairs on our chest.

But it's almost a huge letdown to discover that the game bearing this awesome moniker is in actual fact based

on a Japanese anime. Not only that, but the ninja heroes in question are actually a group of mouthy little brats, who are merely ninjas in training, not actual ninjas.

But wait. *Naruto* may not be that manly, but this game may still have the goods to bask in its reflective glory. A gorgeously cel-shaded 2D fighter, *Ultimate Ninja Heroes* takes the insanely popular franchise and squeezes out another beat 'em up. This time, however, it's wireless enabled.

Mainly based around a neat transportation system and simple yet intuitive one-button combat, *Ultimate Ninja Heroes* is aiming to distinguish itself

from the herd of PSP fighters with grace and gusto.

Whether you're a fan of the perennial anime series or not, *Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Heroes* looks like it could almost... almost live up to its spectacular name after all. **— Mark Serrels**

WHAT THEY SAY:

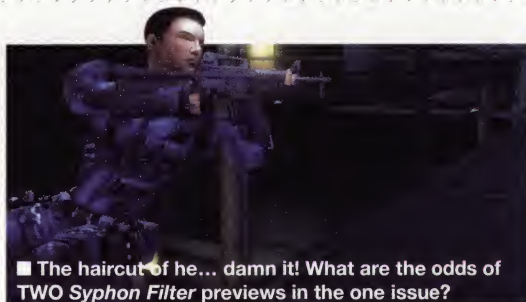
■ "...the first ever wireless enabled fighting game based on the *Naruto* universe on PSP"

WHAT WE SAY:

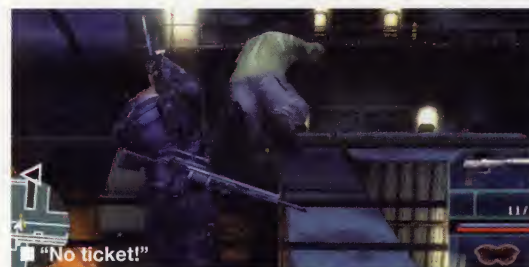
■ Best... name... ever... But can the game live up to it? Hmm...

PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ **GENRE:** ACTION
■ **PLAYERS:** 1 (TBC)
■ **RELEASE:** SEPTEMBER 2007
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY
■ **DEVELOPER:** SONY BEND
■ **WEB:** www.us.playstation.com/LogansShadow/



■ The haircut of he... damn it! What are the odds of TWO *Syphon Filter* previews in the one issue?



SYPHON FILTER: LOGAN'S SHADOW

One of the most underrated PSP titles gets a sequel. ROCK!

Get ready to step into the fancy pants of Gabe Logan once more. For those of you not familiar with the bloke, he's the gadget happy protagonist of the *Syphon Filter* games – a series that got progressively worse on the PS2 and then *Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror* came out for PSP and kicked all kinds of arse. It was what *Splinter Cell* wanted to be on the PSP. Continuing this tradition of handheld dominance Sony is now bringing out *Logan's Shadow* and we couldn't be more excited!

Information is scarce (although follow that link for a butt-whippingly cool trailer) but it seems things have up and gone pig's arse for our Gabe. His team has

been disbanded, his cute Asian assistant vanished, or even worse... she could be a double agent!

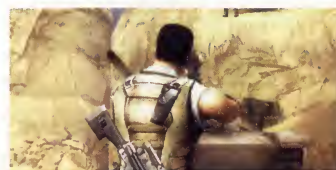
The plot thickens, but that's not the only thing thickening, the gameplay's got a good dose of extra abilities too. Take a gander: You can now swim up to a battleship and shoot enemies off the side. Bon Voyage you terrorist puppy-friskers!

And who's that fella who has worked with Logan for ten years? Could this be another playable character? This is pure speculation – but it's fun.

The graphics look even cleaner than *Dark Mirror* and the 'shamed hero' plot echoes *Splinter Cell: Double Agent* quite nicely (without ripping it off). Games

made specifically for the PSP usually rock the hardest (*Daxter*, *Lumines*, and the upcoming *God of War* prequel) and we reckon *Logan's Shadow* will be no exception. Hell, some of us are still playing *Dark Mirror* now!

Roll on September, we say, roll it on. Expect to see a lot of ink on this one, true believers. **— Anthony O'Connor**



WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "...sequel to the award winning *Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror*... features all-new combat mechanics, weapons and an engaging storyline that will leave you wondering who to trust."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ *Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror* was, and continues to be, an awesome action title. If they can crank out a sequel as good as that trailer makes it look – we'll be first in line, baby!

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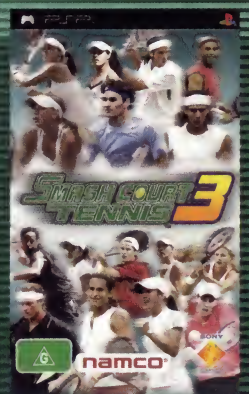
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DRIVING AMBITION

OPS GOES TO STUNT SCHOOL!

To celebrate the release of THQ's upcoming *Stuntman: Ignition*, OPS flew down to (bitterly cold) Melbourne for a trip to Sandown Raceway (or, at least, the Sandown Raceway carpark) for a crash course in stunt driving. Under the expert tutelage of veteran stuntman Kevin Flynn and his crew of daredevil cohorts from Driver Dynamics, OPS learnt how to thrash a humble Toyota Echo around to within an inch of its life. We also found out how utterly ridiculous games journalists look in helmets...

The 180° ROX Park

The idea of this test is to use the handbrake to flick the rear of the car around and let it slide in reverse between two imaginary parked cars. Totally money if you can pull it off. The idea was to do it *anywhere after* the cone. We, on the other hand, thought we needed to do all this as close to the cone as possible. We hit the cone a bit. Okay, every time. Why was that cone even there? We *hate* that cone.



The SPlit-Surface 360°

Take a long sheet of wet vinyl and a Toyota Echo without ABS brakes. With half the car on the slick surface and half on the coarse road, the wheels lock up and the side with no grip gives way to the side with grip. Cue spinning. The front wheel leaves the vinyl and the rear one hits it. Cue more spinning. You just slam down the brakes and hold the steering wheel straight. That's all there is to it.



The Ramp-to-Ramp Jump

So, you're only doing 40km/h. That's slow by anyone's standards. We've hit speedbumps faster than that. However, when you're approaching a 20 foot ramp to leap over a few metres of empty space it seems fast enough. Besides, you're acutely aware that if you botch things up you'll end up upside-down with glass in your face. Plus, THQ won't invite you to do anything ever again.



TWO-Wheel Driving

So we'd like to say that's us behind the wheel of this gravity-defying Corona - but it's not. Actually, DD head honcho Kevin Flynn is driving - but OPS scored a trip around the carpark in the passenger seat. Kevin actually holds a two-wheeled World Record - he drove a car on two-wheels between two parked cars, 60cm apart. We've seen cabanossi sticks longer than that. All three cars were his.





CUT TO THE CHASE

So, what was the actual point of all these stunt shenanigans? Well, to be honest THQ was just tickling our bellies in the hope we'd come straight back and wax glowingly on the upcoming *Stuntman: Ignition* – something we will do right now.

But we won't feel bad about it, because the game really is a hoot.

As the game itself edges closer and closer to release it's becoming abundantly clear Paradigm is committed to making *Stuntman: Ignition* a real contender for your Christmas dollars. Having somewhat of a soft spot for the brutally hard but equally bold original, and being acutely aware there are no other driving games like it, we truly would like to see it succeed.

We were given a full afternoon to thrash the latest build of *Stuntman: Ignition* until its chassis quivered and the controller went flat (which it did) and are glad to report it really seems Paradigm has managed to recapture just what made the original tick.

We saw a number of brand-new levels (the final game will feature six movies, with 36 individual stunt runs across all of them) and squeezed behind the wheel of some fresh vehicles, including an armoured car and a missile-laden hovercraft.

One of the new levels on display was a distinctly *Mad Max*-inspired blast 'em up called 'Strike Force Omega'

– the kind of flick you would expect on the direct-to-DVD shelf at your local Video Ezy, possibly starring Steven Seagal (in a skivvy, to hide his 11 chins). Armour-plated SUVs, cannon-spewing muscle cars, mobile missile trucks and dune buggies bristling with rockets are all on offer here. High speed desert burns punctuated with impossible jumps and explosions are common. Another level was a James Bond-style adventure called 'Never Kill Me Again', which was similarly packed with vehicle-on-vehicle combat but (somewhat unfortunately) based on the icecapades of *Die Another Day* (easily the worst Bond film ever, and we're counting *Moonraker*).

Our favourite, however, was the affectionately titled 'A Whoopin' and a Hollerin' II' – the sequel to perhaps the best level in the original. The *Dukes of Hazzard* flavoured malarky is perhaps the most enjoyable level, where stunt-filled jaunts through barns and backwaters are the order of the day.

We also tried our hands at multiplayer, and we were immediately impressed that not only does *Stuntman: Ignition* feature eight-player online multiplayer (which is, to be honest, almost a given these days) it supports four-player split-screen multiplayer (an almost forgotten science outside of kart-racers, and an inclusion that makes *MotorStorm*'s lack of split-screen all the more unforgivable).

The first mode we dived into was the Backlot Battle, which is essentially a cross between a single-player stunt run and a mad, multiplayer pack race. It's based on a circuit, there's a distinct start and finish line and points are awarded for finishing first, BUT, there's more to winning than nabbing first place. Throughout the course are stunts you'll be required to complete. Success will net you points; failure will earn you a demerit. Accumulate five demerits and your score will be reset. Of course, just like the single-player mode you can chain the stunts together with improvised deft driving (drifting, near-misses, etc.) but if you're struck by an opponent in the middle of a combo you'll lose all those potential points to them. Expect dirty tactics.

The second mode, the Backlot Race, is a conventional race, and stunts aren't necessary – although they earn you boost, so they have advantages.

The third and last multiplayer mode uses the single-player levels and sets you loose with up to eight other players simultaneously (opponents will show up as ghosts).

Overall? *Stuntman: Ignition* looks set to be a lot of fun. After a successful stunt run you really do feel like some half-man, half-god precision-driving *mofo*. Like you could drive a car through the eye of a needle. *On fire*. We'll have the definitive verdict next issue. **B**

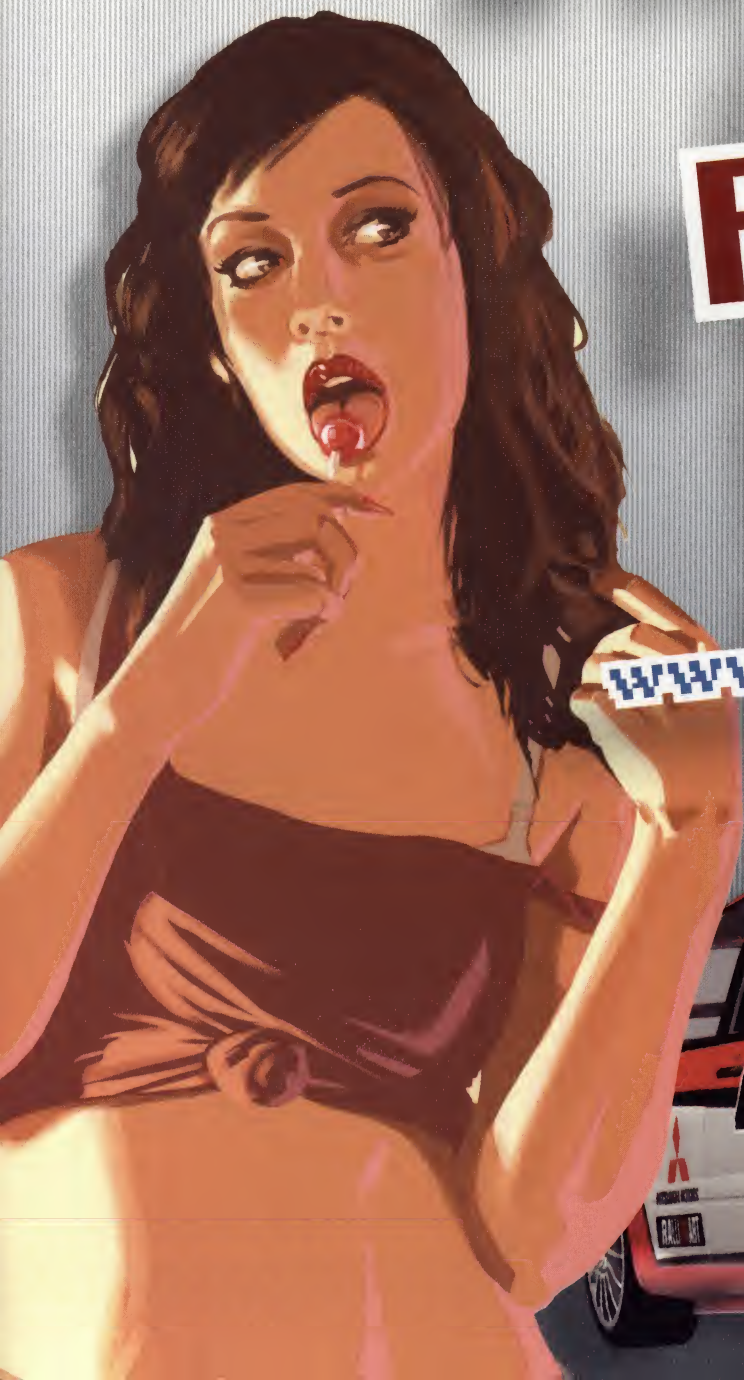




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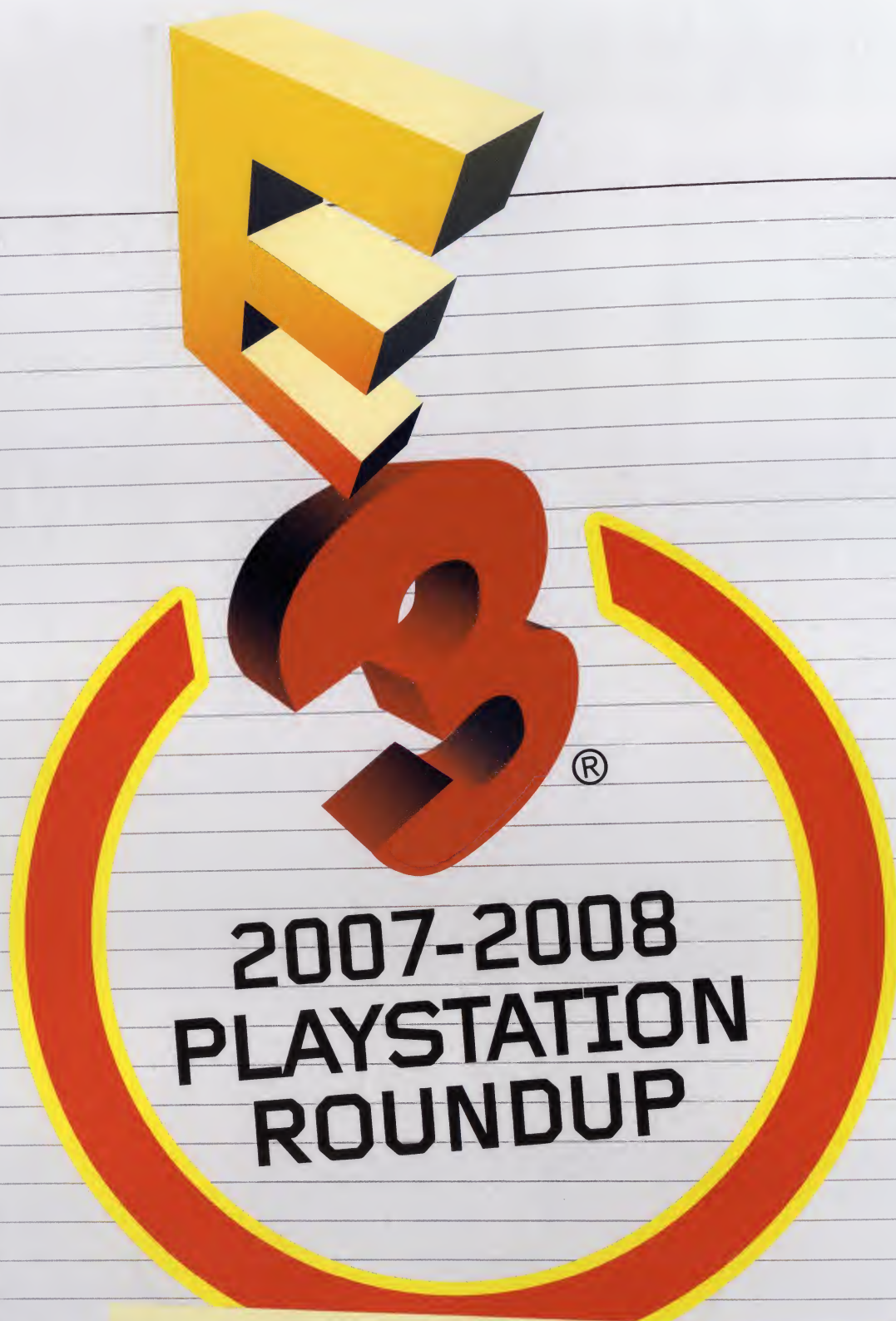
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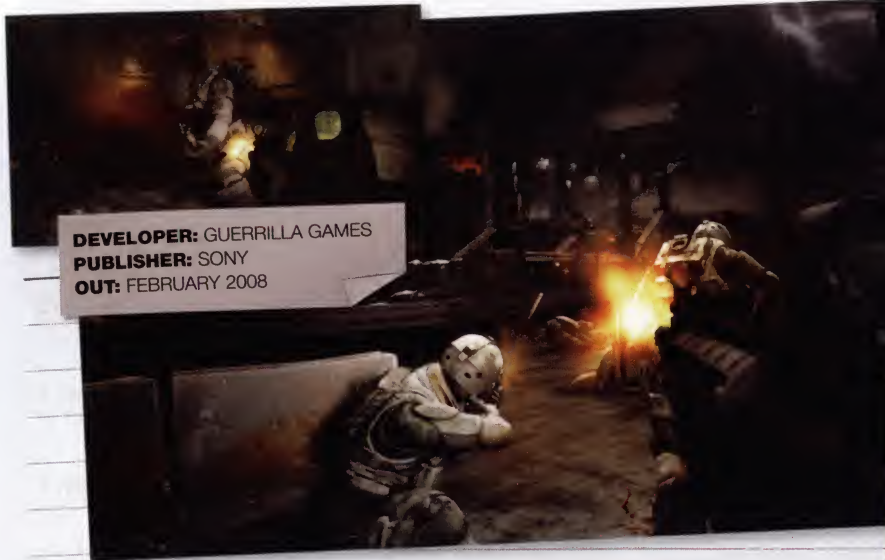
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are you one?



Behold! The definitive list of upcoming PS3, PS2 and PSP games for the rest of this year and beyond is right here – most direct from E3 2007 in sunny Santa Monica. Enjoy!

You may want to seriously consider selling a kidney (or, for the slightly more nasty among you, selling someone else's kidney). Just saying...

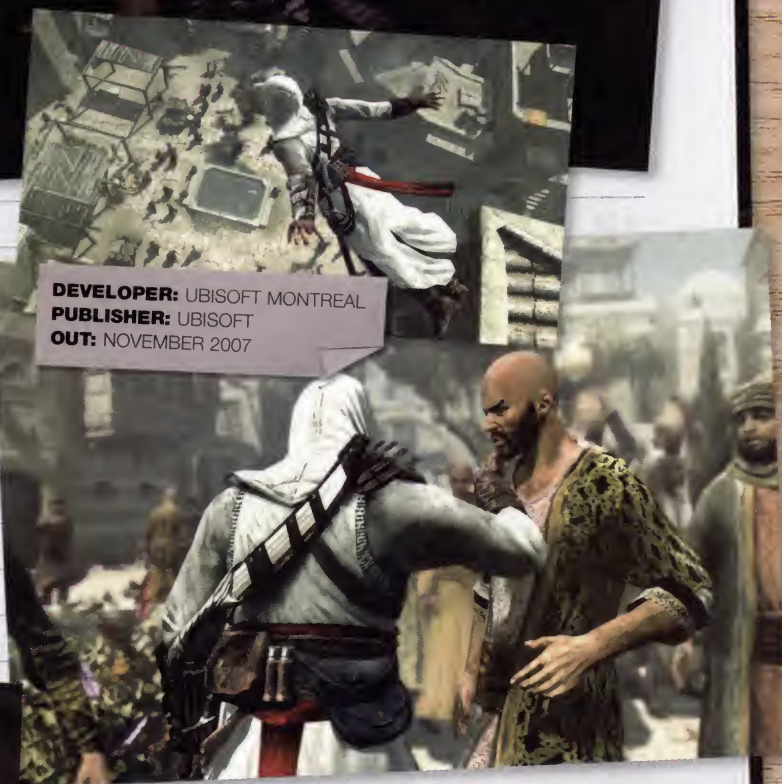


DEVELOPER: GUERRILLA GAMES
PUBLISHER: SONY
OUT: FEBRUARY 2008

PS3

KILLZONE 2

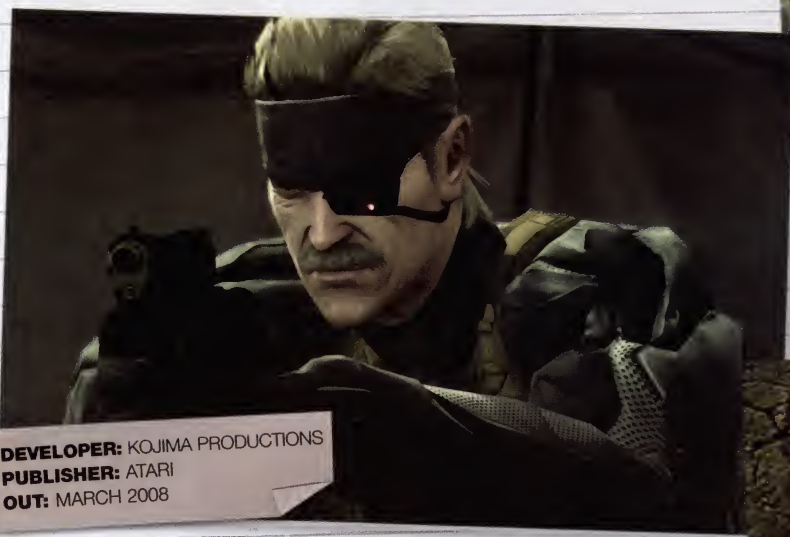
It's back. After two years in the ether *Killzone 2* (yeah, that's what it's called now) is back in the limelight – and it's looking spectacular. Two years of speculation and concern over whether the game could ever really live up to the extremely impressive trailer from E3 2005 have been laid to rest. The E3 2007 demo opens up not unlike the first – a number of flat-topped dropships soar into view, each covered with soldiers clutching onto the railings exchanging short, sharp sentences about the upcoming landing and their almost imminent deaths. The ships hit the ground (not before one is shot out of the sky, plummeting to the deck in a trail of thick black smoke) and it's on for young and old. As the battle raged below, lightning tears open the sky and it becomes quickly apparent that Guerrilla has come far closer to the original trailer than most anyone thought possible. The scope, the visuals (the character models use the same amount of polygons as an entire level of *Killzone* on PS2), the desperation and THOSE reload animations? This is a shooter to get excited about.



DEVELOPER: UBISOFT MONTREAL
PUBLISHER: UBISOFT
OUT: NOVEMBER 2007

ASSASSIN'S CREED

If you want the skinny on Ubisoft's killer new kill 'em up, turn to page 30 – we won't repeat ourselves here. Suffice to say though, this one is going to go off like a frog in a sock.



DEVELOPER: KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS
PUBLISHER: ATARI
OUT: MARCH 2008

METAL GEAR SOLID 4: GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS

Killzone 2 was far from the only big gun unleashed at E3 this year – *Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots* was also shown off to the adoring masses. Game guru Hideo Kojima debuted a brand new trailer of his upcoming opus.

A few intriguing story details were revealed in the new trailer. The trailer opens in much the same way as previous ones, but a few more familiar faces pop up. Meryl is seen leading a squad of soldiers and arch-nemesis Liquid Snake is spotted surveying a camp of mercenaries. It quickly becomes apparent Liquid is using these soldiers in a test of the third-generation nano-machine weapon, SOP – a weapon that Snake is all too familiar with (the FOXDIE bio-weapon that Snake previously discovered in his body is the first-generation). Just as Liquid is shown observing an outbreak take over the soldiers (as well as Snake, Meryl and her team – except for one balaclava clad man) the trailer cuts to an amazing brawl between Raiden in his ninja clobber and Vamp, the immortal returning from *MGS2*. Both survive multiple death blows, and it leaves you wondering when, where (and how) this contest will actually end.

Although all the footage was cinematics it was all derived from game engine graphics. Kojima promised that the actual game you play will be of this quality. Expect to see some gameplay from Tokyo in the very near future.



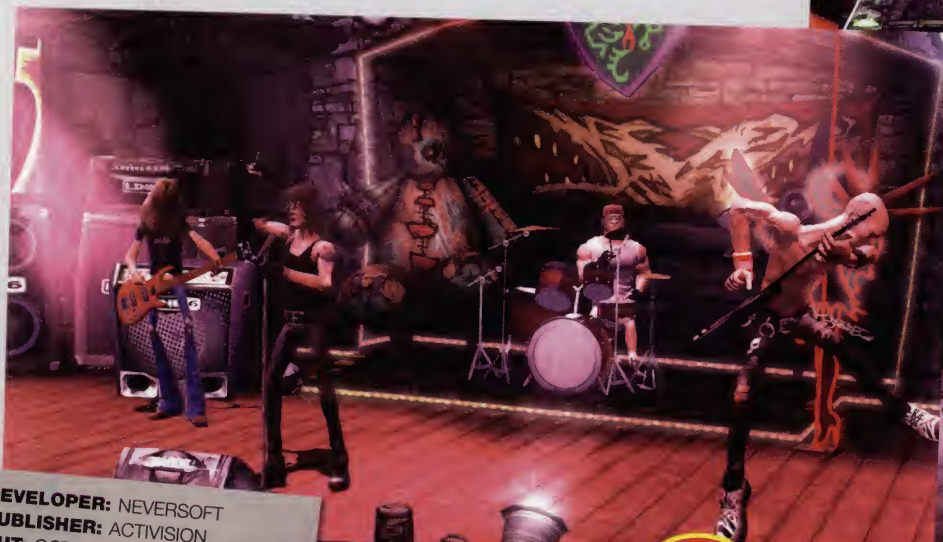
DEVELOPER: HARMONIX
PUBLISHER: EA
OUT: DECEMBER 2007

ROCK BAND

God damn, we're stoked about this sucker. E3 2007 proved to be a fountain of *Rock Band* information – so much so that we're positively stiff in the trousers just thinking about it. Closely modelled on the *Guitar Hero* series, *Rock Band* reuses many of the same gameplay elements, although expands on them two fold. In other words, in addition to having lead guitar and bass, *Rock Band* features drums and vocals too. The game will feature independent Solo Tour Modes for three of the instruments (lead guitar, drums, and vocals) and a Band World Tour for multiple players. Other multiplayer modes include head to head play on any instrument, co-op play and more. All multiplayer modes will support up to four offline players or online players, or any combination of the two.

The Fender Stratocaster replica guitar controller (similar to the *Guitar Hero* controllers), will feature 10 frets (five normal buttons and five up high for face-melting solos) and an effects switch. Harmonix has also confirmed *Guitar Hero*'s Les Paul controllers will be compatible with the game. The drum kit features four pads, a bass pedal and two sticks and the mic will be not unlike a *SingStar* mic (although unlike *SingStar*, a phoneme detector will pick up the individual vowels and consonants – so you can't just hum the pitch). The mic will also double as a tambourine or cowbell (thank you, Harmonix) when you're not singing. *Rock Band* has a swag of big names on board already and new downloadable content will be available WEEKLY after its release, including full albums – the first of which will be *Who's Next* by The Who.

'Paranoid' **Black Sabbath**
'Wanted Dead or Alive' **Bon Jovi***
'Suffragette City' **David Bowie***
'Learn To Fly' **Foo Fighters***
'Main Offender' **The Hives***
'Enter Sandman' **Metallica***
'Mississippi Queen' **Mountain**
'In Bloom' **Nirvana***
'Rockaway Beach' **The Ramones***
'Tom Sawyer' **Rush**
'Vaseline' **Stone Temple Pilots***
'Reptilia' **The Strokes***
'(Don't Fear) The Reaper' **Blue Öyster Cult***
'Go with the Flow' **Queens of the Stone Age***
'Say It Ain't So' **Weezer***
'Won't Get Fooled Again' **The Who***
***Master Track**



DEVELOPER: NEVERSOFT
PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION
OUT: OCTOBER 2007

'School's Out' **Alice Cooper**
'Sabotage' **Beastie Boys***
'Slow Ride' **Foghat**
'Welcome to the Jungle' **Guns N' Roses***
'Barracuda' **Heart**
'Rock and Roll All Nite' **KISS**
'Cult of Personality' **Living Colour***
'Even Flow' **Pearl Jam***
'Knights of Cydonia' **Muse***
'Lay Down' **Priestess***
'Paint It, Black' **The Rolling Stones***
'Rock You Like a Hurricane' **Scorpions**
'Cherub Rock' **Smashing Pumpkins***
'The Metal' **Tenacious D***
'My Name Is Jonas' **Weezer***
***Master Track**

ALSO ON
PS2

GUITAR HERO III: LEGENDS OF ROCK

It might be easy to forget about this one in the midst of all this *Rock Band* madness (and we're probably not helping) but our advice is: Don't.

After all, it's still *Guitar Hero*. Ergo, it's still rad. And that's plenty good enough for us.

Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock (yeah, it's got a sub-heading now) should prove quite familiar to the many who are already on board the bandwagon, although it will boast a smattering of new and tweaked modes – the most interesting of which is an added Battle Mode. Two players face-off against each other trying to complete a song, but successfully playing Star Power sequences earns attacks that can be used against opponents (including Broken String, Double Notes and Lefty Flip among others). We doubt it'll replace co-op as our favourite multi mode, but it should be fun. Former Guns N' Roses guitarist Slash has been announced as a boss in the game, and lead developer Alan Flores has stated that there will be over 70 songs on the final soundtrack. You can't kill the metal...



DEVELOPER: POLYPHONY DIGITAL
PUBLISHER: SONY
OUT: AUTUMN 2008

GRAN TURISMO 5

Sony and Polyphony Digital have been teasing us with this *Gran Turismo HD* nonsense for long enough now. The free *GT HD* download proved to be a short-lived (but free, admittedly) diversion, but we want a 'proper' sequel.

And here it is.

The granddaddy of all driving sims is coming back to the track, and if the razor-sharp visuals are any indication, *GT* creator Kazunori Yamauchi means business. If you thought *GT HD* looked good, prepare to be seriously amazed.

Details on *GT5* are scant – aside from the incredible quality of the graphics the brief trailer revealed little more than a few cars (a Ferrari F430 and an Audi R8 among others – all meticulously modelled, down to the 4.2L V8 throbbing under the R8's rear windshield). However, to give you a taste of what the full game will offer, *Gran Turismo 5 Prologue* will be coming to the PlayStation Network later this year. The demo will let players race online for the first time in the series.



CALL OF DUTY 4: MODERN WARFARE

Whether you're slogging it out on the ground – bullets snapping by with the scent of dust and cordite hanging heavy on the battlefield, or circling in the air above pouring it on from the bowels of an AC-130 gunship, *Call of Duty 4* will put you there like no other shooter before it. The sheer authenticity of Infinity Ward's latest, and the immersion it will offer, is second to none.

We've already reported most of what we know of *Call of Duty 4*, although we did recently learn that bullet penetration looks to be featured. Different calibre slugs will penetrate surfaces to varying extents (high calibre weapons will be able to punch through thick walls, something that will come in handy in multiplayer).

Speaking of multiplayer, *Call of Duty 4* will ship with a new Realism Mode, where a single shot to the chest or head can kill and getting shot in the leg will cause you to fall down. Another multiplayer feature is dubbed the 'Last Stand'. If you take too much damage, you will fall down but automatically draw your pistol. At this point you can either kill yourself (denying a full kill to your opponent) or let loose a few shots in the hope of finishing your enemy.



DEVELOPER: INFINITY WARD
PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION
OUT: OCTOBER 2007

OUR E3 TOP 10s

(AND REMEMBER, *GT4/V* WASN'T AT E3 THIS YEAR)

NAZ

1. Resident Evil 5
2. Assassin's Creed
3. Call of Duty 4
4. Mercenaries 2: World in Flames
5. Killzone 2
6. Uncharted: Drake's Fortune
7. Heavenly Sword
8. Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots
9. Devil May Cry 4
7. The Simpsons

MARK

1. Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots
2. Assassin's Creed
3. LittleBigPlanet
4. Call of Duty 4
5. Resident Evil 5
6. Rock Band
7. Lair
8. Heavenly Sword
9. Uncharted: Drake's Fortune
10. Ratchet & Clank Future: Tools of Destruction

LUKE

1. Rock Band
2. Call of Duty 4
3. Assassin's Creed
4. Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock
5. Mercenaries 2: World in Flames
6. Killzone 2
7. Gran Turismo 5
8. Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots
9. LittleBigPlanet
10. Uncharted: Drake's Fortune

INFAMOUS

Developer: Sucker Punch **Out:** TBA 2008
An open-world adventure that allows the player to make choices between being a hero or an anti-hero. Superpowers (telekinesis, super agility, flight, etc.) will play a major part.

HAZE

Developer: Free Radical **Out:** November 2007
A serious, bleeding-edge shooter. Interesting Haze E3 2007 trivia: enemies can (and will) 'play' dead - just to mess with your head.

THE BOURNE CONSPIRACY

Developer: High Moon **Out:** Q3 2008
An espionage thriller based on Robert Ludlum's Jason Bourne. It will feature famous scenes from the best-selling novel.

MERCENARIES 2: WORLD IN FLAMES

Developer: Pandemic **Out:** Q4 2007
Co-op, destructible environments, over 200 vehicles, brand new weapons (including the bunker-busting MOAB bomb)? Oh God, yes.

ALSO ON
PS2

GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

Developer: Rockstar North **Out:** October 2007
GTAIV didn't make its presence felt at E3, but turn to page 26 for all the new stuff we have on 2007's number one game.

RESIDENT EVIL 5

Developer: Capcom **Out:** TBA 2008
Capcom revealed a brief new trailer for RE5 at E3 2007, but it didn't reveal too much. It certainly looks the goods though, and unlike any Resident Evil before it.

HEAVENLY SWORD

Developer: Ninja Theory **Out:** September 2007
E3 2007 saw a new playable character unveiled. Kai. Kai uses a crossbow, and the bolts are controlled with the SIXAXIS tilt.

MEDAL OF HONOR AIRBORNE

Developer: EA EA **Out:** November 2007
This may well be the Medal of Honor game we've been waiting for to resurrect the ailing series. The WWII shooter is 'borne' again.

PROTOTYPE

Developer: Radical Entertainment **Out:** TBA 2008
Head to page 70 for the full scoop, but believe us when we say it's shaping up sweet. Infamous has MAJOR competition.

SKATE

Developer: EA Black Box **Out:** August 2007
An authentic skating sim. Instant replays will feature, allowing you to watch and save tricks using multiple camera angles.

ALSO ON
PS2 & PSP

NEED FOR SPEED PROSTREET

Developer: EA Black Box **Out:** November 2007
Flick to page 66 for a rundown on everything we know about this sucker so far and how it stacks up against its main rival, Juiced 2.

THE ORANGE BOX

Developer: Valve **Out:** October 2007
Contains Half-Life 2: Episode One, Half-Life 2: Episode Two, Portal and Team Fortress 2. Half-Life 2: Episode Three will probably be a later download.

DESTROY ALL HUMANS! PATH OF THE FURON

Developer: Sandblast Games **Out:** TBA 2008
E3 2007 revealed Crypto has a new gun that summons a giant Venus Human Trap.

MX VS. ATV UNTAMED

Developer: Rainbow Studios **Out:** January 2008
It'll feature bigger, more populated outdoor open-world environments, an X-cross career mode, EnduroCross and a tonne of vehicles.

THE SIMPSONS GAME

Developer: EA Redwood Shores **Out:** October 2007
Like the show, the game will poke fun at pop culture and other videogames. It's not based on the film. Check page 32.

ALSO ON
PS2 & PSP

RATCHET & CLANK FUTURE: TOOLS OF DESTRUCTION

Developer: Insomniac **Out:** November 2007
New weapons will include the Groovitron, a disco ball grenade which makes enemies dance to The Bee Gees' 'Staying Alive'. That's unique...

FOLKLORE

Developer: Game Republic **Out:** October 2007
Using the SIXAXIS the player must battle monsters and shake them into submission to literally yank their powers from them.

TURNING POINT: FALL OF LIBERTY

Developer: Spark Unlimited **Out:** November 2007
In this FPS the Nazis have invaded New York. Survive the goose-stepping onslaught.

KANE & LYNCH: DEAD MEN

Developer: IO Interactive **Out:** Summer 2007
A violent cinematic action adventure from the creators of Hitman packed with shootouts, robberies and plenty more. Squad-based mechanics and co-op play will feature.

ARMY OF TWO

Developer: EA Montreal **Out:** November 2007
A co-op shooter, players that die will have to "run away from the light" while the other nails a button sequence to perform CPR.

LITTLEBIGPLANET

Developer: Media Molecule **Out:** TBA 2008
Featuring co-op and physics-based gameplay - LittleBigPlanet is completely unique. User-created levels are made possible with the content-creation tools supplied within the game.

SOCOM: CONFRONTATION

Developer: Slant Six Games **Out:** TBA 2007
A 32-player, online-only tactical shooter. Zipper is working on another SOCOM title. It will feature single-player and multiplayer.

SNAKEBALL

Developer: Sony **Out:** July 2007
A PSN downloadable title, Snakeball is a 3D remake of Snake. The PlayStation Eye camera can be used map your face onto your rider.

TONY HAWK'S PROVING GROUND

Developer: Neversoft **Out:** October 2007
Proving Ground will include real-time changes to your skater's appearance based on the injuries. Create-a-Park will return with more than 400 skateable items.

ALSO ON
PS2

PAIN

Developer: Idol Minds **Out:** TBA 2007
Another PSN downloadable title, PAIN will see gamers attempt to do as much damage to themselves as possible by flinging themselves from a rubber-band catapult. Havoc physics put to good use.

SINGSTAR

Developer: Sony **Out:** August 2007
SingStar will feature 30 songs, but the online SingStar will launch with over 300 songs - including the entire PS2 back catalogue. Songs will be added monthly. Hey ya

ALSO ON
PSP

ECHOCHROME

Developer: JAPAN Studio **Out:** TBA
Echochrome will be a PSN downloadable game. It's a unique puzzle game where you're solving a world of puzzles by navigating by a mannequin.

EYE OF JUDGEMENT

Developer: JAPAN Studio **Out:** TBA 2007
Utilising Wizards of the Coast's trading card expertise and the PlayStation Eye camera, trading cards are brought to life to battle on screen.

SOUL CALIBUR IV

Developer: Project Soul **Out:** TBA 2008
The fifth chapter of the series (counting the original *Soul Edge*). For the first time in the series history, the game will have competitive online play.

FRACTURE

Developer: Day 1 Studios **Out:** TBA 2008
A third-person shooter set in a US civil future-war. Features tectonic technology that allows you to raise and lower sections of the landscape.

FALLOUT 3

Developer: Bethesda Softworks
Out: Q4 2008
An RPG from the makers of *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion*. The E3-2007 trailer shows a devastated Washington D.C.

SILENT HILL V

Developer: The Collective **Out:** TBA 2008
Konami unveiled *Silent Hill V* at its E3-2007 press conference. Plot details are scarce, but it revolves around a returned soldier in search of his brother – and he's led to Silent Hill.

HOME

Developer: Sony **Out:** October 2007
PlayStation Home is a community-based service for the PSN, in development since early 2005. See page 82 for all the details.

COLIN MCRAE DIRT

Developer: Codemasters
Out: September 2007
Colin may have been delayed a tad, but it's still looking like the rally game to beat. WRC will need to step up its game.

CONAN

Developer: Nihilistic **Out:** TBA 2008
A hack 'n slash, *God of War*-style splatter-fest based on Robert E. Howard's public domain, loincloth clad muscle-man.

TIME CRISIS 4

Developer: Nex Entertainment **Out:** TBA
Initially reserved for the arcades, Namco announced it will be releasing a PS3 conversion bundled with the *GunCon 3*. It will feature a special FPS mode.

LAIR

Developer: Sony **Out:** September 2007
With two nations at odds over resources and environmental catastrophes, *Lair* is a nod to contemporary issues like global warming, oil and terrorism.

STRANGLEHOLD

Developer: Midway Chicago
Out: September 2007
A distinctly *Max Payne*-style shoot 'em up featuring Chow Yun Fat. Turn to page 42 for our initial hands-on thoughts.

STAR WARS: THE FORCE UNLEASHED

Developer: LucasArts **Out:** April 2008
Set between *Revenge of the Sith* and *A New Hope*, the player is Vader's apprentice. Uses Digital Molecular Matter and the euphoria engine.

BLACKSITE: AREA 51

Developer: Midway Austin
Out: September 2007
The US is about to be overrun with aliens and it's up to you to send ET home. Features complex squad behaviour.

ENEMY TERRITORY: QUAKE WARS

Developer: Z-Axis **Out:** TBA
A class-based multiplayer FPS, *Quake Wars* will be packed to the gills with kick-arse future tools and heavy ordinance.

DARK SECTOR

Developer: Digital Extremes
Out: TBA 2008
You're an assassin who feels no pain. Also, you can spontaneously 'grow' a three-bladed throwable weapon. Right...

TOP SPIN 3

Developer: PAM Development
Out: TBA 2008
Features dynamic weather changes, a unique user-generated component and a robust online and offline career mode.

HEIST

Developer: inXile Entertainment
Out: November 2007
Set in San Francisco, circa 1969, you will lead a band of crims as they rob, steal and shoot their way through the city.

LEGO STAR WARS: THE COMPLETE SAGA

Developer: Traveller's Tales
Out: November 2007
A combination of both previous *LEGO Star Wars* games with next gen varnish.

BLAZING ANGELS II: SECRET MISSIONS OF WWII

Developer: Ubisoft Romania
Out: August 2007
Features a hangar full of experimental WWII prototype aircraft, plus an air-racing mode.

HAIL TO THE CHIMP

Developer: Wideload Games
Out: TBA 2008
Hail to the Chimp is a crazy party game featuring a political race in the animal kingdom. Backed by Gamecock.

TUROK

Developer: Propaganda Games **Out:** Early 2008
A brand new start to the *Turok* franchise, *Turok* on PS3 will still feature all the crazy weaponry and flesh-eating dinosaurs you know and (used to) love.

RISE OF THE ARGONAUTS

Developer: Liquid Entertainment
Out: TBA 2008
An RPG revolving around the legend of Jason and his search for the Golden Fleece.

CLIVE BARKER'S JERICHO

Developer: Mercury Steam
Out: October 2007
A supernatural FPS from the warped mind of horror author Clive Barker.

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 3

Developer: Epic Games
Out: November 2007
Exclusive to PS3 until next year, UT3 is a class-based multiplayer FPS like *Quake Wars* that looks stunning.

JUICED 2: HOT IMPORT NIGHTS

Developer: Juice Games **Out:** September 2007
Flick to page 66 for a full rundown on everything we know about THQ's potential giant-slayer and how it measures up against its main rival, *Need for Speed ProStreet*.

ALSO ON
PS2

STUNTMAN: IGNITION

Developer: Paradigm **Out:** August 2007
The unique action racer returns, and it's even more over-the-top than ever. It is, however, more forgiving this time around. See page 52 for our latest thoughts and our real-life stunt driving experience.

UNCHARTED: DRAKE'S FORTUNE

Developer: Naughty Dog **Out:** TBA 2008
A treasure hunting action adventure. Part *Die Hard*, part *Indiana Jones* – Dude Raider. Nathan Drake is Lara Croft without the boobs.

ALSO ON
PS2 & PSP

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 08

Developer: EA Tiburon **Out:** September 2007
Tiger 08 will support GameNet for player-created challenges. Make a trick shot, and upload it to see if anyone can match or better it.

ALSO ON
PS2

NASCAR 08

Developer: EA Tiburon **Out:** July 2007
NASCAR 08 will feature a Vehicle Telemetry Visor for real-time feedback while racing, day-night transitions and a new instant replay function.

ALSO ON
PSP

HELLBOY: THE SCIENCE OF EVIL

Developer: Krome **Out:** TBA
A brawler that sees Hellboy go toe-to-toe with the crazed Hermann Von Klempt. Selma Blair, Doug Jones and Ron Perlman star.

THE CLUB

Developer: Bizarre Creations **Out:** TBA
A mix of elements from action shooters with combo and point-based combat. *The Club* centres around an underground gladiatorial blood-sport.

ALSO ON
PSP

SEGA RALLY REVO

Developer: SEGA Driving Studio
Out: TBA 2007
A high-octane arcade rally experience, it will feature multiple cars on track jostling for position and dynamically deformable terrain.

THE GOLDEN COMPASS

Developer: Shiny Entertainment
Out: December 2007
Based on the film, this game sees you assume the role of young Lyra Belacqua as she attempts to rescue a friend from "The Gobblers".

ALSO ON
PS2 & PSP

CIVILIZATION REVOLUTION

Developer: Firaxis **Out:** TBA 2008
The latest in the *Civilization* strategy series from industry stalwart Sid Meier is coming to PS3. Meier has said, "This is the game I've always wanted to make."

WWE SMACKDOWN VS. RAW 2008

Developer: Yuke's **Out:** November 2007
Each wrestler will now feature two fighting style categories, one primary and one secondary. It'll also feature the revived ECW.

CONDEMNED 2: BLOODSHOT

Developer: Monolith Productions
Out: Q1 2008
A former Serial Crimes Unit investigator is called back to find his missing partner.

NBA LIVE 08

Developer: EA Canada **Out:** October 2007
Vastly improved player models and hundreds of new animations are just a few of the adjustments to the successful *NBA Live* formula.

DARKSIDERS: WRATH OF WAR

Developer: Vigil Games **Out:** TBA 2008
Featuring the artwork of famed comic artist Joe Madureira you play as War, one of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

BROTHERS IN ARMS HELL'S HIGHWAY

Developer: Gearbox **Out:** November 2007
Promising to be *Call of Duty 2* meets *Rainbow Six Vegas*, *Hell's Highway* will be a thinking man's WWII tactical shooter.

BURNOUT PARADISE

Developer: Criterion **Out:** Q4 2007
Two words - Showtime Mode. At any point after a crash, tap [X] and [Y] and you'll enter Showtime Mode where you can literally keep your crash going, and going, and going...

DEVIL MAY CRY 4

Developer: Capcom **Out:** TBA 2007
Take control of the surly emo Nero and his crazy, possessed killer arm. Use it to kill loads of evil creatures. That old chestnut.

TIMESHIFT

Developer: Saber Interactive
Out: September 2007
Shift time. Kill bad guys. Making use of time manipulation (so hot right now), *TimeShift* is an interesting FPS.

THE LAST REMNANT

Developer: Square Enix **Out:** TBA 2008
An RPG, *The Last Remnant* is directed at both Japanese and Western audiences and will have a simultaneous release - a first for Square Enix.

THE AGENCY

Developer: Sony Online Entertainment
Out: TBA 2008
A spy-themed, massively multiplayer online shooter. The game will combine FPS action with RPG-style character building.

ALL-PRO FOOTBALL 2K8

Developer: Visual Concepts **Out:** TBA 2007
The spiritual successor to the ESPN NFL 2K series and the first football game from 2K since EA nabbed the exclusive licenses. 240 football legends will feature.

MADDEN NFL 08

Developer: EA Tiburon **Out:** August 2007
60 frames per second, new branching animations, the return of co-op play and the Hit Stick 2.0 - *Madden* is finally taking shape for the upcoming generation.

ALSO ON
PS2 & PSP

FRONTLINES: FUEL OF WAR

Developer: THQ Studio Oz
Out: January 2008
An intense, cinematic FPS that combines shifting lines and non-linear action.

TOM CLANCY'S ENDWAR

Developer: Ubisoft Shanghai
Out: TBA 2008
Real-time strategy for the console generation. It's a World War III RTS techno-thriller from the Tom Clancy universe.

BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY

Developer: DICE **Out:** March 2008
90% destructible environments and a gold-stealing plot that's a cross between *Three Kings* and *Kelly's Heroes*? Nice.

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2008

Developer: Konami **Out:** October 2007
The major new feature is an adaptive AI system called Teamvision, which adapts to how you play and adjusts accordingly.

TO END ALL WARS

Developer: Kuju **Out:** Winter 2008
Promises to be a brutally authentic First World War FPS with deadly trench battles, charges across no-man's land, night missions and artillery barrages.

MIDNIGHT CLUB: LA

Developer: Rockstar San Diego
Out: TBA 2008
The word from Rockstar? "*Midnight Club: Los Angeles* will deliver a truly immersive next-generation racing experience."

THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: ASSAULT ON DARK ATHENA

Developer: Starbreeze Studios **Out:** TBC 2007
Largely a remake of the original (*Escape from Butcher Bay*) *Dark Athena* will have much improved visuals, added content and a multiplayer mode.

AND THE REST...

NFL Tour

An arcade gridiron game from EA.

2 Days to Vegas

Ambitious open adventure that keeps disappearing. Supposedly due.

NHL 2K8

2K hits the ice again.

The Getaway

Absent from E3 2007, although we're sure it's cooking something up.

NHL 08

EA whacks an 08 on *NHL 07*.

Fatal Inertia

About the only game Koei has that isn't *Dynasty Warriors*.

The Wheelman

Vin Diesel's take on *The Transporter*.

Eight Days

No mention of it at E3 2007 either. Future is hazy.

Saboteur

Mercenaries goes French Resistance in occupied Paris.

FIFA 08

Word has it Australia's A-League may feature.

NBA 2K8

The follow-up to the impressive *NBA 2K7*. Duh...

Wipeout HD

1080p *Wipeout* is coming to the PSN. Drool...

L.A. Noire

Rockstar and Team Bondi's Aussie-made detective story is due soon.

Mirror's Edge

A new FPS from DICE (*Battlefield*) promising to shake things up.

Race Driver One

Or *V8 Supercars 4* for those of you playing at home.

Final Fantasy XIII

Curiously absent from E3 2007. We guess it might come out next year. Maybe.

ALSO ON
PSP

DESTROY ALL HUMANS! BIG WILLY UNLEASHED

Developer: Locomotive Games **Out:** TBA 2008
Crypto is back to enslave the world through fast-food stores and using an all-stomping mech by the name of Big Willy.

SYPHON FILTER: DARK MIRROR

Developer: Sony **Out:** TBA 2007
Gabe Logan is out to smash a terrorist group by the name of Red Section. Run-and-gun fun for single and multiplayer fans awaits.

ALSO ON
PSP

CRASH OF THE TITANS

Developer: Radical Entertainment **Out:** October 2007
Crash Bandicoot steps up to the plate when nasty neighbours the Cortex's start transforming the inhabitants of his island into mammoth freaks.

SPIDER-MAN: FRIEND OR FOE

Developer: Next Level Games **Out:** TBA 2007
An all-new Spidey game see the webbed one team up with familiar villains to take down a global threat.

THE LEGEND OF SPYRO: THE ETERNAL NIGHT

Developer: Krome **Out:** TBA 2007
Spyro takes on a nasty bloke called the Ape King who's obsessed with bringing darkness to the land in this Adelaide-grown adventure.

BEE MOVIE

Developer: Beenox Studios **Out:** November 2007
A spin-off off the upcoming Dreamworks flick, you'll lead star bee Barry B. Benson about and experience the world from his tiny perspective.

ALSO ON
PSP

AQUA TEEN HUNGER FORCE ZOMBIE NINJA PRO-AM

Developer: Midway **Out:** TBA 2007
An epic action-adventure, combat golf cart racing game set on the best golf courses New Jersey has to offer, based on the [adult swim] cartoon.

JACKASS

Developer: Sidhe Interactive **Out:** December 2007
Forgo limits of physics and taste to indulge in 35 whacked-out stunts with digitised versions of the Jackass crew.

DRAGON BALL Z: BUDOKAI TENKAICHI 3

Developer: TBA **Out:** TBA 2007
More galactic kung fu cartoonery await Saturday morning peeps eager to take control of a staggering 150 playable characters.

ALSO ON
PSP

HARVEY BIRDMAN: ATTORNEY AT LAW

Developer: TBA **Out:** TBA 2007
Based on the US cartoon, this will play out more like an interactive episode of the show rather than a traditional gaming escapade.

VALKYRIE PROFILE 2: SILMERIA

Developer: Tri-Ace **Out:** September 2007
This mystical action RPG prequel by gurus Square Enix will dabble in Norse mythology and recruit dynamic combat mechanics.

MOTOGP 2007

Developer: Milestone **Out:** TBA 2007
The motorbike series for both newbies and seasoned pros is set to return with an updated roster for the 2007 season.

NARUTO: UZAMAKI CHRONICLES 2

Developer: Bandai **Out:** TBA 2007
Mad adventurer Naruto will be out to defend the Hidden Leaf village from an ancient evil keen to awaken a mechanical beast.

SINGSTAR '90s Rap Meter

Developer: Sony **Out:** October 2007
More SingStar magic, this time featuring the best of the '90s including cuts from Radiohead, The Cranberries, MC Hammer, The B-52s, Aqua and many, many more.

PSP

GOD OF WAR: CHAINS OF OLYMPUS

Developer: Ready at Dawn **Out:** TBA
Keep an angry bald man in your pocket wherever you go with this stunning prequel that's set to redefine the PSP.

SYPHON FILTER: LOGAN'S SHADOW

Developer: Sony Bend **Out:** TBA 2007
Gabe Logan returns in this sequel to *Dark Mirror* as he goes up against a terrorist who's stolen devastating technology.

FINAL FANTASY TACTICS: THE WAR OF THE LIONS

Developer: Square Enix **Out:** October 2007
Born again update of the classic RPG game by Square. Expect new CG scenes and head-to-head multiplayer modes.

SOCOM US NAVY SEALS TACTICAL STRIKE

Developer: Slant Six Games **Out:** TBA
Jam that itchy trigger finger. This is instead set to be more about strategy and team member placement.

SILENT HILL ORIGINS

Developer: Climax Entertainment **Out:** Oct 2007
Youch! This will be the PSP debut of this esteemed pant-wetting franchise. Players will control a trucker trapped in the demonic town.

STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT: RENEGADE SQUADRON

Developer: Rebellion **Out:** September 2007
Prep yourself for this ground/space shooter set amidst the turmoil of the *Star Wars* era. 16-player multiplayer support to be included.

ALSO ON PS2

PURSUIT FORCE: EXTREME JUSTICE

Developer: BigBig Studios
Publisher: Sony **Out:** August 2007
Vehicular combat gone ape! This sequel will take place across a new variety of vehicles including planes and jet skis while featuring 4-player support.

FLATOUT HEAD ON

Developer: Six by Nine **Out:** TBA 2007
Destroy your car, and hopefully other things as well, as *FlatOut* roars onto the PSP. Three game modes and multiplayer will complete the package.

NARUTO: ULTIMATE NINJA HEROES

Developer: CyberConnect 2 **Out:** TBA 2007
A team-based fighter that sees players manage a squad then go head to head with the CPU or another player.

SWAT: TARGET LIBERTY

Developer: 3G Studios, Inc. **Out:** October 2007
Isometric shooter set in, wait for it, NYC where an increasing amount of terrorist activity needs to be thwarted. Ad hoc multiplayer will feature.

NAPOLEON DYNAMITE

Developer: Crave **Out:** TBA 2007
Based on the cult flick of the same name, players control Napoleon as he rides about town showing off his various "skills". GOSH!

DEAD HEAD FRED

Developer: Vicious Cycle **Out:** October 2007
This action romp sees a reincarnated headless P.I. take on mobs of mutated foes while chopping and changing around his replacement heads. True.

GODZILLA UNLEASHED

Developer: Pipeworks Software **Out:** November 2007
Paddle up with Godzilla as he takes on a slew of other infamous oversized creatures amidst massive cities and urban areas.

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GRUDGE MATCH

Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights and *Need for Speed ProStreet* – two very similar racing games with the same agenda. Both have undergone some radical changes and both are going to be bucking for your gaming dollar within the next few months. The stage is set for a street racing showdown. Which one will be sitting pretty on the podium and which will be sucking on exhaust? That's up to you. Gentlemen, start your engines...

When THQ revealed *Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights* we were suitably impressed. Here was a racer, we thought, that was moving with the times. With interest in street racing on the wane, *Juiced 2* shifted its focus towards sanctioned

events in real world locations. As a result, the whole thing now feels far more professional, more legitimate, and far less 'underground' – which, frankly, is dating fast.

EA responded in kind. We had a suspicion it would have had something

■ *Juiced 2* is hot on the tail of EA's veteran *Need for Speed* series



similar on the boil for some time and we weren't wrong. EA announced *Need for Speed ProStreet*, a marked departure for the series that takes the stalwart racing franchise off the streets and onto the track.

Suddenly, it was a two horse race – and both THQ and EA are pulling out all the stops regarding their respective new directions.

How do they stack up?

THE GIRLS

Okay, so maybe our priorities are a little whack, but hear us out. If publishers didn't want us commenting on the 'talent' they wouldn't make such a fuss about announcing their inclusion in the first place (Marketing: 1, Gender equality: 0). EA and THQ know their market, and they know that girls and cars go together like beer and pizza. *Juiced 2* has über-hottie Ursula Mayes (and THAT bikini) while *ProStreet*

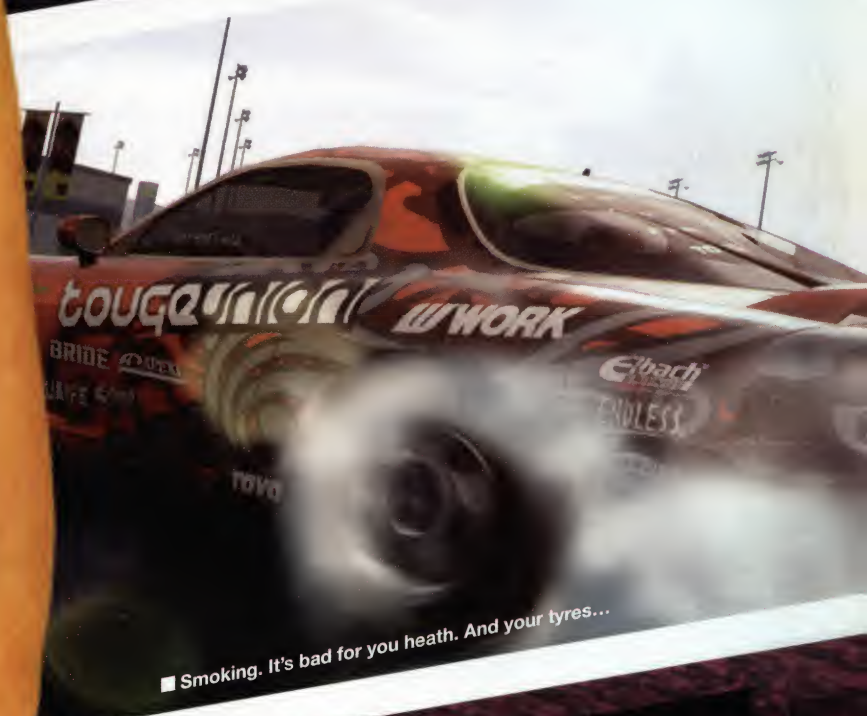


has local girl Krystal Forscutt (presently bucking *Big Brother* tradition by doing something other than hosting piss-poor spin-offs or frying chicken at KFC). Please, don't make us choose. (cough... Ursula... cough).



THE CARS

Juiced 2 is set to feature upwards of 90 cars from around the world, including tuners, exotics and muscle. In fact, it won't be unlike the range found in the original *Juiced*, only expanded significantly. As you'd expect, they're all licensed models. We've only been privy to a smattering so far, but it's an eclectic bunch of rides ranging from the Honda S2000 to the '74 Ford Gran Torino. A few European supercars will feature, but exactly which ones hasn't been confirmed. We know far more about *Juiced 2*'s garage than *ProStreet*, although we don't imagine it'll differ too greatly from *Need for Speed Carbon*. The rumour mill is buzzing with claims it'll feature around 60 cars (mainly



■ Smoking. It's bad for you heath. And your tyres...

MIDNIGHT CLUB LA 洛杉磯

THE STROKE OF MIDNIGHT

There's one racer that might slip your mind amidst the street racing stoush between EA and THQ, and that's Rockstar's *Midnight Club Los Angeles*. *Juiced 2* and *Need for Speed ProStreet* may be shunning the streets for closed tracks, but *Midnight Club Los Angeles*, the franchise's first foray onto PS3, is sticking to its roots. We certainly can't blame it – *Midnight Club* was the original open-world racer, after all. We'll have details soon.

PARTY TIME. EXCELLENT

Both *Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights* and *Need for Speed ProStreet* are really pushing the party atmosphere hard – meets are equal parts rave and racing, with enough T&A to set feminism back to the Stone Age. Check out the photos below for a glimpse at the *Hot Import Nights* show at San Diego – remember all those ridiculously cute girls at school? The ones who never talked to you? Yeah, they like cars now. And taking off their clothes. And lying spreadeagle on the bonnets of expensive cars owned by guys with more money and bigger pecs than you. They'll laugh at your jokes about lubrication but inside you'll die a little. She also knows you're looking at her crotch. At any rate, it's like a laser-show with cars moving around in the background, or a rock concert where all the backing singers were made in Japan and run on premium unleaded. *Juiced 2* has the benefit of being based on a real-world ass and asphalt extravaganza, but that doesn't mean the festival vibe of *ProStreet* is any less credible. Check out the panty drop zone around the 350Z. Apparently pussy magnets are a factory extra. Thankyou Nissan.



tuners and muscle, ranging from the '99 Mazda RX-7 to the '70 Plymouth 'Cuda) and that supercars will be rare (limited to around eight or so). We don't know if *ProStreet* will (finally) feature Australian cars (absent from the series for around five years), but when we know, you'll know. *Juiced 2* will include the Holden Monaro CV8 and Ford BA Falcon.

THE TRACKS

ProStreet is doing away with the open-world environments the *Need for Speed* series has been utilising since *Underground 2*, opting instead for enclosed circuits. *ProStreet* will feature a number of iconic raceways from around the world, including Daikoku Futo in Yokohama, Japan and Infineon Raceway in Sonoma, California. There's no word on whether any Australian circuits will make the cut, although we certainly hope somebody's on the case. We'd be more than keen to burn around Eastern Creek, Mount Panorama or even the soon-to-be-closed Oran Park – tear. *Juiced 2*'s tracks will be similar to the tracks featured in the original – they're still (mostly) based on neon-splashed

closed-down city streets – although instead of all being located in the one fictional city they cover locations across the globe. Rome, London, Paris, San Francisco and Sydney, amongst others, will all feature.

THE RACING

Juiced 2 will boil down to two main disciplines, circuit and drift. Each one will be further divided into additional race types. The drifting, for instance, will vary between solo jaunts to intense battles against a number of rivals at 120km/h, three inches apart and sideways. Drift races will take place on purpose-built twisted circuits in exotic locales around the globe. Disappointingly, however, both drag racing and show-off modes failed to make the jump from the original.

NFS ProStreet will feature a slate of racing disciplines – drag, drift, speed and grip. Drag will no doubt be warmly welcomed back after going AWOL in *Carbon*, and drift should prove a hoot largely thanks to the incredible new smoke effects you can see in the screenshots. Speed racing is a little

different – it involves thrashing vehicles across flat, sprawling desert expanses (we're thinking salt-lakes here, maybe?). Grip racing is *ProStreet*'s version of standard circuit racing, only far more aggressive.

CUSTOMISATION

Customisation is something *Juiced 2* is taking very seriously. Players will also be able to modify and tune their cars with over 10,000 upgrades from 300 manufacturers (which we imagine is one hell of a logistical licensing nightmare). Performance modding is broken down into power, weight and handling upgrades plus you can see changes and parts being applied via an X-ray view of your car. The usual array of cosmetic tweakables are again on offer (they include inside the cabin too) and you'll be able to stretch, scale and rotate up to 50 layers of vinyl and decals (from a pool of more than 2000 manufacturers logos, unique designs, lettering and geometric shapes). Further still you'll be able to sell designs online, designs that will remain credited to your username for the life of the car. You'll even be able to customise

■ ...driving them as fast as possible...

■ ...and doing it as stylishly as possible

■ *Juiced 2* is all about making your cars as sexy as possible...

THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS

Ford XY GT-HO Phase III
The greatest Oz muscle car ever and the world's fastest four-door for many years.

Holden Torana A9X
With a thonking 5.0L V8 under the bonnet, it saw Peter Brock and Jim Richards claim two Bathurst wins.

Valiant Charger R/T E38
The early '71 Charger was the fastest-accelerating car built in Australia – a title it held for 27 years.

Holden HJ Monaro GTS
Far more imposing than its predecessor with a blacked-out grille and aggressive side vents. Choice.

Ford Falcon XB GT
Mad Max's car, "The last of the V8 Interceptors..." Do you need any other reason?

your own character and deck him or her out in whatever clobber you wish.

ProStreet's customisation model is a little more mysterious at this point, but we know it's been heavily modified to take advantage of the new physics engine. The goal in *ProStreet* is for every change to your vehicle to have an effect on the track – which will be demonstrated in a wind tunnel that will give immediate feedback on alterations to speed, aerodynamics and general performance. The Autosculpt feature from *Need for Speed Carbon* will return in *ProStreet*.

ONLINE

Juiced 2 will have an extremely robust online mode. The career itself can be played out online, replacing AI opponents with human components.

Juice Games is trying to bridge the gap between online and off. *Juiced 2* will feature a number of elements from the original too, like pink slip racing and gambling options. Up to eight players can race online, but up to 1000 players can log on to bet game credits on the race's outcome.

EA isn't divulging many online details right now, but we do know you'll be able to download other gamers' custom setups for particular cars and events thanks to the blueprint system that allows you to save and upload particular setups or swap with other players. We also imagine there's a great deal of potential in online race meets, particularly considering the variety of different events that will be on offer.

KEEPING IT REAL

Juiced 2 feels familiar to the original *Juiced*, although the handling is a little tighter – sitting comfortably between the on-rails nature of games like

Burnout and the sim-

sensibilities of titles akin to *V8 Supercars*. The drift model isn't unlike the one in *Need for Speed Carbon* – a looser, far more exaggerated system that allows the car to get sideways with the greatest of ease for Hollywood-esque powerslides that are (relatively) easy to control. We had plenty of chaotic crashes during our time with the game, but the damage appeared to be fairly superficial.

The physics engine for *ProStreet*, however, is a brand new beast. A dedicated team from EA Black Box spent more than a year perfecting the engine, and the result is touted as something far more authentic and realistic than any previous *Need for Speed*. It's not a punishing model, but EA is promising cars will react like they should and convey a heightened sense of speed and danger. The new damage model, the number one fan request, will have you thinking more about the consequences of

rash actions – one wrong move can, and will, total your ride. The damage really is something to behold – the rollover we saw was a violent, metal-rendering, glass-shattering stack that left the car on its roof, sans an axle and any intact windows whatsoever. Interestingly, minor damage like dents and paint scrapes from jostling on track will be persistent, meaning you can carry them like war wounds throughout your career. Expect our verdict soon. ▬



Need for Speed ProStreet, on the other hand...



...is taking a slightly different tack...



...and making damage a key element you'll need to manage

Holden Commodore VK SS
The VK SS Group A was a Bathurst winner, and one of Peter Brock's favourites.

HSV GTS E Series

HSV's latest beasts are the fastest Australian-made cars ever, doing 0-100km/h in under five seconds.

FPV F6 Typhoon

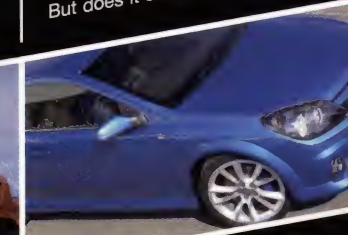
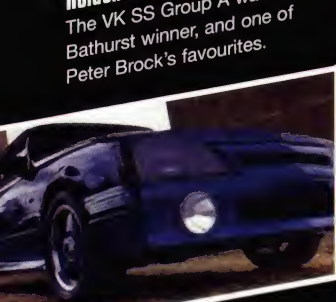
It was a tough call between this and the FPV GT-P, but the hardcore version of the XR6 Turbo wins.

Ford Focus XR5 Turbo

It's German, but that XR5 badge is good enough. The exhaust note puts other performance hatches to shame.

HSV Astra VXR

Imagine the uproar if we chose the XR5 but forgot the VXR? But does it come in orange?



WORDS: ANTHONY O'CONNOR

DEATH WEARS A HOODIE

MEET PROTOTYPE. WE RECKON YOU'RE GOING TO GET ALONG FAMOUSLY!

Here at *OPS* we love games. A lot. Consequently sometimes we get a little bit excited and use phrases like "must have" or "total winner" or "buy this game or you'll cough up your colon and it will lie twitching on the ground like a limbless piglet." Then, when the review code comes... the hype is not lived up to. It makes us a big bunch of sooky sad pandas.

A lot of games don't live up to their potential. Due to rushing madly to tie in with a movie, attempting to beat another similarly themed game to the shelves or simply meeting an unrealistic deadline – the preview frequently betters the finished product.

Now... let's talk about *Prototype*. What's that you say? You've never heard of it. Ah, yes. That's to be expected. This has been a secret squirrel project for about two years and it's not coming out until late 2008. So why the hell are we talking about it now? Because after we were shown a nine minute trailer of in-game footage we quietly took our jaws off the floor and asked, very politely, if we could see it again.

NINE MINUTES OF BLISS

First up – we'll set the scene. It's New York – and yes, we know, *GTAIV* is essentially set in New York (or Liberty

City for the purists). Regardless, that's where we saw our rather non descript anti-hero Alex Mercer in the demo.

He takes a moment to scan his surroundings. Times Square during the day. Hundreds of people mill about. Talking, chattering, arguing – it could almost be considered a normal day in America. But then we look a little closer and we see a strong military presence. Some streets are barricaded, soldiers are patrolling – something's going on. Could it be to do with Alex?

Suddenly, Mercer attacks a passing pedestrian. He pounds them to the ground, his fists spattering the screen with blood. Then he stands up and absorbs the corpse. Suddenly our formerly human-looking protagonist sprouts gnarled, and viciously sharp, claws (think Wolverine, but more organic). Clearly he's not a fan of crowds because he starts slashing his way through them. Bodies are cleft in twain, heads sliced off, limbs severed. And then Alex absorbs some more corpses. Just as the police or military are about to find him he transforms into the guy he just killed.

Alex Mercer is a shapeshifter!

BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE...

After sauntering past some confused authorities our "hero" transforms back

into clawed-hoodie man and runs up to a military barricade. He casually lifts one of the army cats into the air and hurls them at his mates. He then makes spikes burst from the ground, impaling a bunch of army dudes. This time he stops to absorb more bodies. Briefly he turns into an army officer, leading the remaining military men to scratch their heads in confusion, but then turns back... and activates a new power.

His whole body becomes covered in





■ "Fire at will, men!" "Which one's Will?" "That joke is a court-martial offence soldier!"

■ "Take him out boys!" "Sorry Sarge, I don't date guys" "And you never will with that attitude!"

■ "Have a nice trip, see you next fall," said Mercer, clearly drawing upon one too many primary school quips



■ He was a hideous monster, no doubt, but he was courteous – taking time out from killing to point Mercer towards the nearest bodega

what looks like concrete. Imagine a mech suit, but more fleshy. Bullets bounce off Alex now as he charges, just like the rhino he resembles, down the street.

Unfortunate pedestrians are either crushed, splattered or knocked away. Cars explode or just fly into the air, bouncing off buildings – causing all manner of carnage.

The military aren't going to stand for this kind of guff. They start really piling on the bullets. Could this be the end for er... Hoodie Man?

No. He transforms into one of the people he absorbed and saunters casually up to what looks like an Earth pimple. You know, if Earth was a head this would be a zit on its face. Dark crimson in colour

and pulsing a brighter red, we were told this is a "hive". A hive for what? We'll get to that later. Either way it's obviously not something Alex likes because he transforms back into claw mode and starts hacking at it with bestial fury.

HOLY CRAP, WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The military, not too happy with Mercer's shenanigans decide to bring out the big guns. A gunship appears. Flying down the street like an angry hornet. An angry hornet with machine guns and missiles, mind you. Hoodie Man runs away, the gunship in hot pursuit. Certainly absorbing people is sweet, the claws rock and running down the street like the lovechild of the Hulk and a rhino is cool – but surely he's met his match now?

After running about halfway down the street Alex veers off and runs towards a building. What the hell can he be thinking? Is he mad? Then came the bit that made us all utter various combinations of "Whoah", "Did you see that?" and "He's running up the [gosh-

darn'ing building!"

Indeed he is. Literally running up the building. Not like Spider-Man's slightly awkward wall crawl – this dude doesn't even break his stride to sprint up the vertical wall.

When he reaches a certain height, all the while dodging the helo's ordinance, Mercer leaps out into the air... and lands on the gunship. Just think about that for a second. He runs up a building, leaps into the air and jumps onto a helicopter. Then he grabs the pilot and co-pilot and throws them out, screaming into the open air. Now Alex has complete control of the gunship.

And that was where the demo ended.

WOW... THAT SOUNDED COOL. BUT WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

Prototype puts you in the dirty hoodie of Alex Mercer. Who's that? We don't know. Not because we weren't listening – even he doesn't know! He has amnesia. He also has powers. Many more than the ones we saw. He upgrades the powers by absorbing humans. But, and this is even cooler, he also absorbs the knowledge and skills of his unfortunate victims. Want to fly a chopper? Absorb a pilot. Want to know the code for a

building? Absorb someone who has access. Basically you find out what *Prototype*'s all about by absorbing the right people. In essence the story is told by your consumption. A running theme throughout the game is "deceive or destroy". You can eviscerate your way through to the end or use the shapeshifting abilities to sneak to your goals – or a combination of the two.

MORE POWERS?

More powers are unlocked. In fact you can choose what sort of creature you want to be in the way you choose to upgrade your abilities. Would you like to be the nimble, wall-running, leap over buildings in a single bound type? Fine. Would you prefer to have Freddy Krueger claws and become a blood-thirsty beast? Yep, do-able. How about a hulking mass that can just burl through obstacles? It's all possible. At the end of the day you can have 750+ different combinations of powers. That means each player will probably have a unique experience. But what's so awesome about these powers if the game doesn't have a cool plot to back it up? It looks like there's no fear there... as you're not the only blight on the city that never sleeps.

BLOOD, MOTHER, BLOOD!

The afore mentioned planet zit that Alex was trying to destroy is a result of the third element of the game: the Mother virus. This is an airborne contagion that turns people bug shit crazy... and breeds nuggety creatures. Why is it called the Mother virus? Well, according to producer Tim Bennisson there is another character in the game who calls herself Mother and believes she is, in fact, the mother of the virus – the throbbing centre of it. But, Tim noted, we don't know if that's the case – she could just be another crazy in a city full of them. Expect a lot of twists and red herrings in this game.

HOW DOES SHE RUN?


The style of gameplay is third-person. Partially sandbox, in that you can tackle a mission in a number of ways, but the plot bottlenecks to a point so an actual linear progression does take place. Radical Entertainment was responsible for *Hulk: Ultimate Destruction* and *Scarface: The World is Yours*. Both games were good... but lacked a certain something. We got the good oil on why. Apparently Marvel kept putting restrictions of what kind of destruction the not-so-jolly green giant could do. The same occurred with *Scarface*. Al Pacino himself insisted his on-screen persona could not kill innocent people. There are no such restrictions with *Prototype*. In fact the human absorption mechanic would suggest killing innocents is what it's all about – even though you're trying to save people. Or are you? All involved were very evasive about the story beats but they claim to be proudest of the story. From what we've seen *Prototype* is like the title a lot of gamers have had in their heads. How many times have you daydreamed about a GTA-style universe where you have super

powers – or the city is under threat from monsters or zombies or similar? Well, dream no more – because *Prototype* seems to be that game. Both of them, actually. There are over 250 characters you can absorb and to hear producer Tim Bennisson tell it, "At the start of the game you know nothing, by the end you're the most dangerous, most intelligent person in the world. It's quite a journey."

WAR IN THE CITY

Although we didn't see it, we were told skirmishes constantly break out between the uninfected and the infected. You can join these, perhaps lead a side of the infected to knock out a military installation or turn into a normal-looking human to get past checkpoints. These battles occur in real time so we can only imagine what happens to poor old New York by the end of the game. What is this virus? Where did it come from? Is Mother really the mother of it? Are you a force for good or evil? In fact, *what* are you?

None of these questions have been answered – and yet still we're damn excited about this project. Perhaps the fact that it's been years in the making and still won't be coming out for another year and a half is cool – as we talked about in the intro – because too many games come out half baked. Whether *Prototype* ends up being the goods or not, it cannot be accused of rushing to stores. There's a real sense of integrity behind this title – it'll come out when it's good and ready, polished and slick. Maybe it's because we like the idea of being a man/thing that can basically do anything. Perhaps it's the sheer scope of the beast. One thing's for sure we are going to be on this title like a tick on a kelpie, sucking any delicious bit of information we can out of it. We're due for a hands-on experience soon so expect to hear more. Much more.

Prototype may not be a superhero game – but it damn sure looks super. 

■ "Okay guys, he's taken the bait! Now shoot him before he shoves his fist through my face! Guys? Guys! C'mo..." THUMP!

MORE THAN ONE MONSTER IN THIS TOWN!

The Mother virus, at some stage – we're not sure when – gives birth to these rather nasty looking beasts. We're not sure if you can absorb these suckers – but it would be sixteen fruit flavours of excellent if you could. Either way *Prototype* looks like it gets pretty monster-rific.

■ "Man, we were just getting to know each other. It's a shame you had to split"

THE PROTO-TYPER

AN INTERVIEW WITH PRODUCER TIM BENNISON

OPS: Tim, where did this come from? It has aspects of *Hulk: Ultimate Destruction* but it looks quite unique...

TB: Yeah, look, we liked *Hulk: Ultimate Destruction* a lot. There were a lot of really cool things in that game but ultimately he's a bit one note, isn't he? "Hulk smash!" and that's pretty much the whole story. We wanted to create a character with a genuine next gen feel... more subtlety. Here you've got real time physics, shapeshifting. You can actually fool people into thinking other people are you and start fights, watching them wipe each other out.

OPS: Cool! The fact you have powers sort of puts you in the superhero genre. But Alex Mercer isn't exactly a hero, is he?

TB: We didn't want to make a superhero game. We wanted a more free, more extreme mechanic. There are so many different ways to interact with people and the world. We wanted to put out a title in a more creative headspace than, "Look, you can see each bullet hole." That's not truly next gen, that's just better graphics.

OPS: What are you most proud of?

TB: The heavy focus on customisation. The number of powers you can access is amazing. See, you're not actually a person. You're... well, you'll see.

OPS: Can you give us a run down on some of the other powers?

TB: Okay, well, there's Hammer Fist – where you shift the mass of your body and make your fists big, bulky things. There's the fibre shield, which you can make out of your mass. If it gets shot to pieces, you just need to absorb some people and regrow it. Also Whip-fist – where you shoot your arm out and flip people or impale them. For example Whip-fist the truck and throw it at the helicopter.

OPS: It's mid 2007 and it already looks the business, what the hell is it going to look like by the end of 2008?


TB: You'll see a lot more playable vehicles. Plus the dynamic war that rages across the city. The game and city progresses like the character. You start off in New York, and things look normal, but once the random viral outbreaks start occurring martial law is declared and

people are kicked out of their houses so the military can occupy their buildings.

OPS: Wow, so there really is a solid narrative going on?

TB: The story was the focus of the game. You have to make the player care or else why would they bother. So we keep upping the ante.

OPS: What's the structure like?

away from sci-fi – that's why we set it on New York – we wanted to ground the game. The third threat is the Mother and it's a virus. Everyone in New York is going to die. People's behaviour starts to change. And it gives birth to other creatures. There's a character in the story who believes she's the living intelligence of the virus. But it's entirely possible she's just completely mad. One of the things you'll have to do is find out. 

SO WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU?

This is pure speculation but your entire body seems to be made up of some grey liquid... stuff. It can be seen when you absorb humans – so we know it's corrosive. And it can harden like a shield. Our guess is you're an escaped science experiment – but we could way off the mark. One thing we know is you're a pretty damn cool character. We can't wait for the end of 2008.



TB: Mission structure is very driven by the story. In some places you can have different problems to solve in different ways. Imagine a tree-like structure – you branch out but you'll eventually come back to a hub. We also have what we call a "web of intrigue".

OPS: Which is?

TB: So you absorb a certain person and suddenly you know "someone knows something was delivered to a doctor". So you absorb the doctor and maybe he remembers a toe tag of the body you're looking for. There's a very cool detective element.

OPS: Anything you can tell us about this third threat?

TB: The idea is we're trying to keep it

ADDITIONAL INFO

The rep at Vivendi Universal claimed Alex Mercer was the most powerful videogame character ever. Even stating, "He could rip Kratos in half!" Now we can't confirm or deny that – so we reckon it'd be cool to have a Mercer vs. Kratos grudge match! Oh look, we can dream...



Streets of Rage

Burnout's smashed through its trackside guardrails and is taking its chaotic road rage into an ambitious open-city environment. *OPS* cornered series creator Alex Ward for the word on the street about *Burnout Paradise*...

OPS: So, can you give us the lowdown on *Burnout Paradise*? What's the skinny?

AW: Well, it's a brand-new game. We know some people would want us to make the same game again, but we're not interested in that really. We're trying to make *Burnout* a more open, free experience, where the player can choose what he wants to do at any time. You can drive online with up to seven others, and you can 'Freeburn'. We plan on using the PlayStation Eye a lot. Our use of the camera is really cool. The game is running at 60 frames per-second, with traffic, which has never been done before in online racing. We've got some really insane jumps in the game, and the cars are really cool. We're doing new stuff with car destruction, so when you crash, the vehicles really crush together, we're ready to take car damage to the next level. The game uses SIXAXIS control a lot, particularly in crash mode (which we are now calling 'Showtime'). You can shake and control the crash using motion-sensing.

Playing online with your friends is

great. The game lets you track who is the best on your friends list. Let me use a poker analogy. Playing a game of poker with your friends in the kitchen is fun, but finding out who the top player in your group is, is meaningful and powerful. Playing in the World Series of Poker, and finding out you are ranked 20,000 in the world, is not so fun. I know I'm never going to be number one in the world, but finding out who is the best amongst my friends is interesting.

We're trying to redefine the concept of friend lists. We track what your friends have been doing when you haven't been playing, and when you sign on, it gives you a little 24-style 'previously on *Burnout*' thing, telling you if your friend did an amazing drift, or a cool jump.

Oh, and I almost forgot, you can drive up the car parks and jump off the roof, causing a massive huge crash that way. Crash mode is no longer a specific mode, it exists within the open game. It's your game at your pace. My first two hours of the game will be completely different to everyone else's first two hours of the game.



OPS: How will *Burnout's* trademark two minute bursts of gaming translate into an open world of gaming? Does a game with fewer borders require a greater investment of time?

AW: Well it's still *Burnout*, so that hasn't changed. There's just a greater amount of freedom. Before you couldn't choose the route. You had to follow the big chevrons on the road. There was a limitation on how many things you could do, how many things you could crash, you would

have to wait while it loaded. Really we've just expanded the whole concept.

OPS: What sort of research do you put into *Burnout's* crashes, do you watch videos, or do you actually go out and smash stuff?

AW: For sound effects we actually go down to the junkyard. We couldn't really smash up actual cars because of insurance stuff!

We tend to think that if the crashes are too real they are a little boring.

Burnout is all about hyper-reality. So it's all about making the crashes look bloody exciting. Even the most boring crash, say a car hitting a wall, will look truly amazing in *Burnout*.

OPS: How are you going to distinguish *Burnout Paradise* from all the other open-ended driving games that might be trying to do the same thing?


AW: Well firstly, it runs at 60 frames per-second. Secondly, it's *Burnout*. Thirdly,

you can crash your car, and fourthly our online will work.

It's not going to be like other games where there are apparently 150 people racing, but you can't bloody find anyone. It will be easy to find people to play with.

Oh, and our game isn't full of trees.

We're trying to do something new.

You guys write in your magazines about how you're tired of the same old conventions, so even if we do fail, at least we went down in flames. But do you know what? We probably won't, because it's really f--king good. 



■ The hot rod you're allowed to show your girlfriend's dad



■ The Minivan. For blokes with mini... families

INTO THE BELLY OF THE BEAST

Words: Nick O'Shea

After being lured into a murky dungeon deep below the city streets of Paris, the crew of *OPS* grappled with developers to liberate the secrets of their latest licensed project, *Beowulf*.

*'O sovran Hrothgar, to seek thee here,
for my nerve and my might they knew full well.
Themselves had seen me from slaughter come
blood-flecked from foes, where five I bound,
and that wild brood worsted. I the waves I slew
nicors by night, in need and peril
avenging the Weders, whose woe they sought,
crushing the grim ones. Grendel now,
monster cruel, be mine to quell
in single battle!' – Beowulf, Chapter 6*

For those unfamiliar with the source material, *Beowulf* is an epic poem written in England some time in the early Middle Ages that details the heroic (yet mythical) exploits of a legendary Scandinavian warrior in the late 5th century. Not only epic in scale, but also epic in scope, the manuscript has inspired many artists of subsequent generations. For example, it's often stated that J. R. R. Tolkien was strongly influenced by the work in his creation of the *Lord of the Rings* novels, classical composer Wagner created scores inspired by the poem, and in recent years, numerous films have been created more directly based on the legend.

Around a decade ago, Neil Gaiman (an accomplished writer, probably most famous for the *Sandman* series of graphic novels) collaborated with screenwriter Roger Avery (who has worked on numerous projects, including Tarantino's films *Reservoir Dogs* and *Pulp Fiction*, as well as the *Silent Hill* movie) to create a script for a new big screen *Beowulf* adaptation. After being delayed by a lapsed option from Dreamworks, in 2005, Academy Award-winning director Robert Zemeckis expressed interest in the project, with the plan of realising it entirely in motion-captured CGI, in a similar fashion to his previous film, *Polar*


Express (only with less dancing and no Tom Hanks). With some of Hollywood's top tier of talent signing on for the project, including Anthony Hopkins, John Malkovich and Angelina Jolie, *Beowulf* is shaping up to be a must-see movie in cinemas later this year.

RIISING ABOVE IT ALL

While movie licences in the past have often been synonymous with sub-par titles, in recent years, there have been more and more developers managing to buck the trend. The main stumbling block towards making a compelling game experience usually proves to be a lack of flexibility in their approach to development, with the licence holders binding the developer very closely to the subject material of the movie, with very little room for creativity. Right off the bat, this was never the case with *Beowulf*.

"When we presented to the film maker we said 'we've seen your vision, we're going to use that', but the whole tormented hero side comes in the 30 years that is missing from the film's events. That's when the player understands that it's the beast inside of him that he is facing," explained Adrian Lacey, Game Manager for *Beowulf*. He went on to detail how the cinematic approach of flashbacks/flashforwards

■ "Hi, I'm Steve. I like going to the cinema, puppies, and romantic walks in the park"



■ You need night vision goggles to see some of these screens. What are they doing here? Pushing a big ass boulder? Probably

■ "Have at thee, foul harpy!" "Who are you calling a harpy, big nose!"

■ "Bangers and Mash again?" complained Thor. "Can't we just have a salad?"

doesn't work as well within the game's concept, so rather than the previous approach of just highlighting *Beowulf's* heroic deeds, the game actually allows you to create your own destiny over the scope of three decades.

Further detailing the vision for the game, Adrian continued. "Right from the outset we said that we really want to do a mature game. We didn't want a sort of popcorn thing that squeals 'ooh, I'm a Viking!' We said very clearly from the beginning that we are (creating) a next gen game, we're next gen from the ground up."

THE RINGING OF STEEL

As you'll soon find out, though *Beowulf* proves to be a hybrid of many genres, at its core it's a large scale beat-'em-up in the vein of *Dynasty Warriors*. Set deep within the age of Vikings, the Norse hero is ceaselessly facing off in bloody battle against hordes of otherworldly beasts and armies of barbarians, alongside his brave Thanes (mercenaries from a region that would correspond to modern Sweden).

In the gameplay sequences we witnessed, the only weapons we observed were several varieties of swords and shields, but it's quite clear that there will be a far greater list of armaments available when the game is completed, and at the very least we should see appearances from legendary Norse weapons like the enchanted blade Hrunting. Despite the limited number of weapons on show, there was still a decent variety of offensive moves available from its two-button control scheme, with a range of hacks, slashes and thrusts from your primary hand as well as using your shield to bash and batter your enemies.

One nice touch is that if you suffer a series of heavy blows, you can even

have your weapons knocked from your grasp. You can similarly disarm your opponents, but this gives the game a very gritty feel, and also penalises the player for playing poorly, giving you more than adequate motivation to improve your skills. Sometimes you can even find yourself in somewhat of a 'Mexican standoff' situation, where both you and your direct opponent are unarmed and competing to try to recover a discarded broadsword to get the edge (no pun intended) over your foe. In a pinch, you could even improvise and grab a length of bone or log that was strewn on the floor and swing it around wildly, or even go hand-to-hand and pummel your foes with Beowulf's massive fists and powerful grapple attacks.

THE ART OF WAR

Still, the main problem with the 'roving beat-'em-up' genre that *Dynasty Warriors* pioneered is the general lack of troop AI. Historically, your troops would usually lollygag around the one spot on the battlefield, throw out the occasional attack if there happened to be any enemy units nearby, but never add much of a sense of dynamics or strategy to the conflict. The troops are largely window dressing to give the battle a sense of scope, but they don't provide much in the way of interactivity or depth.

Possibly borrowing some resources from Ubisoft's *Ghost Recon/Rainbow Six* titles, *Beowulf* gives you soldiers that act like soldiers. Of their own accord, they will rally around you and attack the opposition, but more importantly, they take orders. One button press takes you to an 'over-the-shoulder' view where you can direct your charges to move, attack or interact with the environment, which adds a massive element of strategy to the game. As well as standard orders, you could also give 'active orders' which involved directing your troops and then continuing to urge them on to bolster their morale. The example we were shown involved ordering your force to close massive stone gates to prevent an unending flow of demonic foes from flooding the area and overwhelming you.

While your soldiers could close the gates without your focussed attention, they operate far more efficiently under your watchful eye. Obviously, this feature takes you out of the battle momentarily, but if you can get yourself out of direct danger, active ordering can provide a considerable tactical advantage in a lot of situations.

GOING IT ALONE

Though a hero often fights alongside his allies, it is usually the feats he performs on his own that he is most remembered for, and as a result, Beowulf will often be required to set off on quests alone. As part of the demonstration, we witnessed a scenario where Beowulf found himself

all alone on a journey to free his soldiers from captivity deep within the bowels of a monster's lair. This essentially played, like an exploratory platformer, at a standard that could easily be compared to past hits like the *Tomb Raider* games or the *Prince of Persia* series.

It's also worth noting that like *Prince of Persia*, the platforming is seamlessly integrated with the combat, so battlefields are not limited to simple plains and level ground. You can use this to your advantage in some instances by clearing out a small elevated area, and using it to get a better view of the battlefield. This enables you to more effectively order your troops, while simultaneously giving you some time to direct your minions and remain relatively safe from incoming enemy attacks.

INNER DEMONS

'Now, Beowulf, thee, of heroes best, I shall heartily love as mine own, my son; preserve thou ever this kinship new: thou shalt never lack wealth of the world that I wield as mine! Full oft for less have I largess showered, my precious hoard, on a punier man, less stout in struggle. Thyself hast now fulfilled such deeds, that thy fame shall endure through all the ages. As ever he did, well may the Wielder reward thee still!' - Beowulf, Chapter 14

One of the central themes of *Beowulf* is that a man is the sum of his deeds, and Ubisoft has worked this into the very core of the game. Many of your various actions throughout the game can be classified as Carnal (selfish) or Heroic (selfless), and this system works on a number of levels, from minor, immediate influences to more telling changes that echo throughout the game's universe.

For starters, in general gameplay,

while many games feature a 'super' bar of some description, Beowulf has two separate meters that gauge his actions, with certain actions deemed to be Carnal or Heroic. From the gameplay we witnessed, utilising the brutal, close-quarters grab attacks on your opponents was deemed to be a Carnal act, while coming to the aid of your Thanes in battle was deemed Heroic.

As your Carnal meter fills, you can opt to unleash its power by flying into a berserker rage, which in itself has its own advantages and disadvantages. As Beowulf goes into a rage, the world around him blurs, dims and takes on a crimson hue as the mighty warrior loses control. While in his Carnal rage, Beowulf's power is magnified considerably, increasing his damage remarkably and allowing him to perform feats of great strength that are far beyond the realms of normal men. During the rage's effects, Beowulf could literally heft boulders and use them as weapons, and could even manhandle massive foes. One particularly impressive demonstration of this was bearing witness to Beowulf put a 12-foot-tall troll's arm out of joint with a hammerlock, and as it was cradling its arm in pain he quickly scooted up its back and snapped its massive neck. Not satisfied with that, as the beast gurgled a death cry, Beowulf forced its jaws open and tore its tongue from its mouth in bloody wrath.

While this sounds utterly awesome, it's worth noting that the Carnal rage has its share of disadvantages. While in a rage, Beowulf is out of control. The minor drawback of this is that his thunderous strikes bear such force upon his opponents that his weapons are more prone to break than usual, but the main caveat is that Beowulf's wild flailing attacks can harm his allies. Due to this, you'll need to exercise great caution in using your Carnal rage when fighting alongside your fellow troops or risk losing them in a careless flurry of blades. Also, after performing such superhuman feats, once his senses return to him, Beowulf will be momentarily exhausted and unable to

OTHER TIMES, OTHER TALES

Fans of the *Highlander* films may want to scour their local video store for the 1999 adaptation of *Beowulf*. Starring B-Movie legend Christopher Lambert and the sexy former-Lara Croft model Rhona Mitra, this movie takes a sci-fi approach to the legendary tale. Though the battle sequences contain more somersaults than a gymnastics event at the Olympics (largely due to the influence of the creators of the *Mortal Kombat* movies), and the special effects look pretty dated by today's standards, B-movie connoisseurs should check it out to get a loose grasp on the story before Zemeckis' epic comes out this November.

■ When mail order brides go wrong...



defend himself. Cunning foes would bear this in mind, and take evasive action while your strength lasted and exploit your moment of weakness once you are tired and defenceless.

While your Carnal rage gives you great strength, on the flipside of the coin your Heroic actions allow you to inspire your allies on to greater heights. In using your Heroic booster, Beowulf punches the air and lets fly with a mighty battle cry, rallying the troops and bolstering their attack, defence and resolve.

FELLOWS, FOLLOWERS AND FATE

This concept of selfish and selfless actions continues throughout the game. For example, you might defeat a monster preying on a local village, which would be considered selfless, but on discovering its treasure trove, you might opt to keep it for yourself rather than returning it to the citizenry and further your own means, which would obviously be considered selfish.

As the years wear on, your various choices will reflect on your kingdom and the people around you. If you remain true to your people and fight for their cause they will sing your praises and fight to the death by your side. If you consistently elect to serve your own purposes instead, those in your court will look down on you with disdain, your troops will desert you in search of a more righteous cause to fight for, and you will noticeably be able to see that your kingdom suffers under your cruel rule, leading mankind into a darker age.

While you might think that there are two paths to choose, it's more a case that there are a great many decisions to make on your long journey. While electing to take a purely Carnal approach may lead to more spoils and power for you, the fact that your retainers leave your kingdom in disdain will leave you at a significant disadvantage in large-scale conflicts. On the other hand, if you operate in purely selfless motives, you may find your kingdom hasn't been able to obtain enough wealth to properly arm itself

against its enemies, and Beowulf may be at a disadvantage when it comes to fighting alone. In the end it seems a more moderate path is the optimal approach, while taking it to the extremes could prove very challenging. "The idea is that we're not saying that you do the dark side or the good side. We're not dictating to the player, he does what he wants, but every action has a consequence" Adrian added. "The whole feeling that the player gets is a story in itself."

COMMANDING THE ELDRITCH ARTS

To power this epic adventure, Ubisoft has taken its *Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2* engine to the next level to create an utterly engrossing atmosphere. While the technology includes a raft of next gen features, such as lighting techniques like HDR, shadow occlusion and colour remaps, as well as cinematic elements like zoom, motion blur and depth of field effects, the small details went furthest towards completing the experience, adding an in-depth layer of atmosphere to the proceedings. As many of the characters' costumes were made chiefly of animal skins, the fur shader that Ubisoft's implemented gives a fantastic sense of movement as their downy clothes billow in the wind and as the characters move.

Another aspect of the fur shader was that the characters' clothing could be wet, stained or soiled.

"One of the things that annoys us in a lot of games is that you never get dirty," confessed Adrian. "We want people to feel as though they've been on a battlefield... they won't come out all shiny and clean." In a similar way that games like *MotorStorm* and *Colin McRae DIRT* mess up their cars, the characters in *Beowulf* become more

soiled and bloodstained as their battle wears on, creating a very gritty sense of realism.

A THING OF LEGEND

Ultimately, *Beowulf* is a very ambitious project, essentially cramming several titles into one will be a mammoth effort for any developer. Early signs are very encouraging, but the success of *Beowulf* will be ultimately determined by how well Ubisoft manages to execute the many elements of gameplay that it's chosen to integrate. However, if everything comes off as planned for the veteran developer/publisher, the *Beowulf* game has the potential to be as lauded as its source material and become one for the ages. **B**

ENTER SANDMAN

While comic fans will no doubt be excited to hear that the award-winning writer Neil Gaiman is at the heart of the upcoming *Beowulf* film, there's an important distinction to be made. While Gaiman has penned tales of Beowulf in the past, his previous work in graphic novels are not source materials for the film. Gaiman is definitely a key part of the writing dream team, but the movie is based squarely on the original epic poem, rather than being an indirect derivative.



■ Twas a dark time for the empire... and a rainy time... a bit cloudy too actually



■ The glorious mud makes *SEGA Rally Revo* a serious potential *MotorStorm* title-snatcher

■ How many people would you have killed to play this instead of the original *SEGA Rally* all those years ago? Two? Three? Three's probably pushing it...



DIRTY DEEDS

With our love for *SEGA Rally* only outstripped by our lust for *Burnout*'s carnage, we thought it was about time that we investigated SEGA's progress with the old rally champ's comeback tour. Guy Wilday, head of the SEGA Racing Studio in London, dished up plenty of dirt on the brand new *Sega Rally Revo*

OPS: The original *SEGA Rally* still stands as a legendary game, but some players feel the series was never improved beyond that first arcade outing. What are your own feelings about the three games in the series to date?

GW: The original is indeed a brilliant game and one that will remain in the hearts of all those who play it. Because it was such a major leap in driving games, it was always going to be difficult to improve upon it. The sequels both added something to the *SEGA Rally* experience and shouldn't be dismissed in any way, but we've focused on what made the original such an impact.

OPS: So how much of an influence has the original *SEGA Rally* had

on the development of *SEGA Rally Revo*? Do you still play the original much?

GW: We have an arcade dual-cabinet machine in the office and we've all played it a fair bit during the development of the new *SEGA Rally Revo*. When we were discussing how to update *SEGA Rally* we looked closely at why the original had been such a massive success and why people still go back to it many years after it originally came out. There were three main areas that really stood out: the stunning visuals, the handling and the closely fought competitive racing. So we decided that with the new *SEGA Rally* we'd aim, above all else, to succeed in these three areas first and foremost.

OPS: With *Revo* being the first *SEGA Rally* title developed outside of Japan, how have you managed to retain the spirit of the series?

GW: Well, everyone on the team is a fan of *SEGA Rally* and has a memory of when they first played it. We studied the original very closely and have the utmost respect for it. We haven't gone in all guns blazing with an arrogant attitude – we've been very respectful and understanding of what made the original so successful.

OPS: Does *Revo* lean more towards the simulation end of rally games then, or is it an arcade game at heart?

GW: It's balanced between the two. We wanted people to have a really fun

off-road experience, but we didn't want to make it so realistic that you lose the fun of racing – after all, if it was super-realistic it wouldn't be so easy to throw the tail out and skid round corners! The thing is, everyone has an interpretation of what realistic driving feels like in games, but we feel that we've managed to tune the handling so that it's easy to pick up and get into, but rewards the players wanting to shave hundredths of seconds off their lap times.

OPS: That's good to hear. So has development on the PS3 been a smooth process?

GW: As with any new piece of hardware, there is a learning curve and it takes time to understand how to get the best out of it. But not only have we succeeded



■ "I wish my wife was this dirty!"

■ Er, SEGA Rally looks rally good? (You're fired - Ed)



■ The fully-deformable track surfaces won't just be a cosmetic change - SEGA is promising it'll have adverse effects on handling (something *MotorStorm* could've explored more)

in making a great racing game, we've managed to build a new engine from scratch - and have fully deformable track surfaces.

OPS: In previous SEGA Rally games, the AI-controlled cars were effectively on autopilot and just followed a set driving line until the end of the race. Has the AI been revamped significantly in Revo?

GW: Yes, most definitely. We have a very intelligent AI that recognises the changes in the driving surface and will seek out the fastest route. It'll be competitive, but everyone will get a fun gaming experience from it.

OPS: That's a relief! Okay, can you tell us specifically which game modes are featured in Revo?

GW: There's Championship: this is the predominant single-player game, where players will be able to unlock cars and tracks. Multiplayer is also in the game, and players will be able to play split-screen and online. We have some other modes, but we'll be going into more details closer to launch.

OPS: And how is the implementation of online multiplayer shaping up? That's

something we're really looking forward to: online SEGA Rally.

GW: We're still optimising this aspect of the game, but it's headed in the right direction. We're positive of being able to achieve an extremely good multiplayer online experience that people will come back to time and time again.

OPS: As an aside, are you disappointed by the lack of rumble inside the SIXAXIS? The original arcade was a force feedback frenzy, after all...

GW: We're providing full support for force feedback steering wheels, so if people want that experience they can attain it.

OPS: We have our wheels at the ready! So will we see new

versions of the original Desert, Forest, Mountain and Lakeside stages in Revo?

GW: There will be a wide variety of levels in the game, and we've certainly taken influence from the original.

OPS: Which aspect of the game are you most proud of at this stage?

GW: If pushed, I would have to say that being able to achieve a

fully deformable track surface that completely adds to the gameplay in a way never seen before in racing games is something that we're all very, very proud of. 🏆

SEGA Rally Revo will be powersliding into Australia this Spring



ONLINE

The latest PS3 Network news, online reviews, reader online section and more!

WHAT'S NEW?

The latest PlayStation Store goodies

Accessing overseas PlayStation Stores

It's important to know that you don't have to get by with just the downloads on the Australian PS Store. You can setup overseas profiles on your PS3 and simply sign in as them to access the extra content available on the US and Hong Kong stores. To do this simply set up a new profile and enter an American or Hong Kong address. This way when you access the store using this profile you will be taken to the overseas stores. What's also cool is that once you start a download from an overseas store, you can switch back to your main Australian profile, start playing a game, and it will continue to download the content you started with a different profile.



Australian Store

The Aussie store has seen another strong month. Hot on the heels of the recent *Super Stardust*, *MotorStorm* and *Resistance* downloads, we've got a fresh crop of insanely cool trailers coming out of July's E3 in LA. *Killzone 2* and *Metal Gear Solid 4* will both melt your brain, as will the latest looks at *Resident Evil 5*, *Rock Band*, *Call of Duty 4* and the always amazing *Assassin's Creed*. Don't forget to grab the second *GTAIV* trailer if you haven't already, and look out for the *Heavenly Sword* demo which is coming soon.



USA Store

Other than a slightly more comprehensive range of E3 videos, the new *Superbad* trailer (from the guys behind *The 40-Year-Old Virgin* and *Knocked Up*) is the main highlight.

Hong Kong Store

The most disappointing of the three, with nothing new but *Everybody's Golf* and an obscure racing game trailer.

Welcome Home

Not all of you are likely to be old enough to remember when RPGs were purely text-based 2D affairs, but you're all no doubt familiar with the hyper detailed 3D worlds that form the basis for current RPGs. Considering games made the jump to 3D over a decade ago it's frustrating that we're still navigating through the online space via dated text-based menus. Sony's clearly come to the same realisation, and has set about creating a 3D interface for all things online that's just as detailed and intuitive as cutting edge games.


Currently your non-gaming interaction with people online is limited to chatting in game lobby menu screens or hassling about with text, voice and video chats. What *Home* does is take all these disjointed elements and merge them into a single interactive world. When exploring the new 3D online space you'll find communicating with friends a much more intuitive experience. If you see a friend you want to talk to you don't need to bother with chat invitations – you simply start talking into your headset and your friend, and any others standing nearby, can talk freely with you. Text chat will also be available while in *Home* (appearing as speech bubbles above your avatar) but what's far more interesting is a new 'create a phrase' feature. *Home* has a few hundred popular sentence fragments that you can navigate through to create a surprising number of handy phrases. What's really cool though, is that *Home* recognises which country and language you use (from your PS3 settings) and translates these phrases on-the-fly so that you can chat freely with foreign language speaking gamers.

Home is so much more than a 3D chat lobby though. As well as chatting you can engage in mini games (pool was one we saw demonstrated) while hanging out, watch trailers on nearby cinema screens or travel to one of the limitless number of other potential *Home* locations (like game-specific stores and preview zones).

The first destination you'll likely head for within *Home* is your own private apartment. Just like the rest of the PlayStation Network experience, *Home* is a free service for all users and within it everyone has their own space. Naturally there will be specific themed items that you can purchase to deck out your pad with but there are also plenty of free ways to decorate your apartment. Any digital photo can be thrown up on a wall in a picture frame and videos from your camera or PS3 harddrive can also be viewed on any of your apartment's televisions.



Fancy showing off your gaming achievements too? *Home* caters for this by allowing you to unlock special items in games that can then be used to personalise your avatar or apartment. Remember the "I completed Vice City and all I got was this T-shirt" outfit you could unlock in *GTA: Vice City*? Items like that would be so much cooler when applied to the avatar that everyone sees whenever you're online. Imagine the bragging rights you'd reap having the world's only Number One *Killzone* Player trophy perched on top of your apartment's TV.

How *Home* is experienced will vary tremendously between people. Will you be crowding into the back of a theatre to be among the first in the world to see the *Resistance 2* trailer, performing in a *Tekken 6* exhibition match in front of a real crowd or just inviting your mates around to check out videos of your bachelor party? However you enjoy yourself at *Home* it's sure to become a far more meaningful backdrop for your online time than the soon to be obsolete menu screens we're using now. 



Rainbow Six Vegas

There's plenty of gold at the end of this Rainbow

■ Developer: UBISOFT MONTREAL ■ Publisher: UBISOFT ■ Out: NOW ■ Players: 1-14

Despite suffering a few delays, now that *Rainbow Six Vegas* has finally been released we're pleased to report it's quickly gathered a thriving online community. Our friends list was peppered with people playing it and online matches were plentiful and easy to join, with only a few dropped connections occasionally spoiling the experience. *Rainbow Six* also supports full voice chat during gameplay and lobbies, as well as text messages and game invites for your friends list.

You'll be spoilt for choice with *Rainbow Six Vegas*' game modes. Screens full of team-based or free-for-all deathmatches and objective matches are on offer, but we inevitably found ourselves drawn to *Rainbow Six*'s unique co-op games.

Unlike the standard deathmatch modes the co-op missions encourage a great sense of teamwork and incorporate all of the strengths of the

singleplayer game. Clearing a room full of terrorists, by having one guy kick open a door, while another throws in a flashbang, right before the other two guys fire through the windows, is a buzz and a half.

Although *Rainbow Six* looks fine on smaller TVs there's an unusually blurry filter that ruins the crisp 1080p picture we should be seeing. While it's nowhere near as bad as the ugly stepsisters, *F.E.A.R.* and *Transformers*, *Rainbow Six* is the third PS3 game to spoil its HD potential with a blurry filter – a trend we hope we've seen the last of.

Visual oddities aside, *Rainbow Six Vegas* provides terrific fun online. A wealth of lag-free and thoroughly enjoyable game modes make it the perfect choice for any online junkies looking to give *Resistance* a well-earned rest. **NP**

★★★



Super Stardust HD

So much better than the fruity name suggests

■ Developer: HOUSEMARQUE ■ Publisher: SONY ■ Out: NOW ■ Players: 1-2

Super Stardust HD's high score leaderboard may be relatively skeletal compared to some of the more fleshed-out online modes on PS3, but the game's twitch-based blasting insanity is so addictive that simple high score rivalry soon becomes an irresistible compulsion.

Running in gloriously detailed 1080p, *Super Stardust*'s visuals will melt your retinas – assuming the hundreds of whizzing lasers, enemies, asteroids and explosions haven't already sent your brain into an epileptic seizure. As amazing as the eye candy is, the ferocity of the onslaught that assaults you, will soon send the visuals to the back of your mind.

Super Stardust is *Asteroids* on crack. Like *Asteroids*, the basic aim is to pilot a ship through

an increasingly dense asteroid field as you shoot first and ask questions later. The developers have injected a number of new ideas into the old template; namely breaking the action out of a confined space and allowing you to speed around a planet, equipping you with a handful of weapons and allowing you to turbo boost through obstacles.

It's easy to mistake *Stardust*'s repetitive rapid-fire action as a retro-styled novelty, but dig into it for any more than a few minutes and you'll find one of the hardest PS3 games to put down since *MotorStorm* and unquestionably the best PlayStation Store download yet. **NP**

★★★★★

GAMER OF THE MONTH



Want to be simultaneously loved, worshipped and adored by your peers? Well now you can! We are planning to immortalise one lucky PS3 gamer from Australia or New Zealand on this page each month.

Want to be the OPS Gamer of the Month? Tell us why at ops@derwenthoward.com.au or meet us online. Only the bestest and most awesomest may apply. Online glory awaits those up to the challenge.



OPS READER SECTION

Online gaming on the PS3 is rolling along nicely now, even if *Resistance* and *MotorStorm* are crushing everything before them as the clear multiplayer games of choice. Online gaming isn't just about shooting and out-racing unknown opponents, although that can be great fun. It's also about meeting up with fellow PS3 fans... and then shooting the crap out of them. With that in mind we've provided details of a few of the *OPS* readers' online names and the game they like to play most. Say hi and challenge them to a game. Remember that online names are not case sensitive. If you'd like to share your online name with fellow readers email us at ops@derwenthoward.com.au with 'Online Challenge' as the subject heading and tell us your name and which game you want to play. Don't forget the *OPS* team's online names are printed on page 8 so feel free to add us and throw down a challenge.

Assasin_Killer – Resistance
Blackadder_05 – Resistance
bounti – MotorStorm
Doxsic – MotorStorm
Cam4v – Resistance
Cosgrove – Resistance
EBK – MotorStorm
Jaz12 – Resistance
Jase619 – Resistance
Malifican – MotorStorm
MrTerminator – Resistance
Muncher78 – Resistance
Phoenixavenger – Resistance
PSIress – Resistance
Shags666 – Resistance
sir_gazman – Resistance
Stinkfire – Resistance
SuperSmashBros – Resistance
turbo180 – Resistance
Vauto – Resistance



LATEST FIRMWARE = 1.82

To make the most out of your PS3 you'll need the latest firmware. Here's a look at what firmware version 1.81 and the more recent 1.82 offer PS3 users.

1080p upscaling – PSone games, PlayStation 2 games and DVD movies are now upscaled to full 1080p HD resolution when viewed on a compatible HDTV. This feature is not the default option though, so you will need to go into the Settings and turn on Game and DVD upscaling. The games and DVDs are only upscaled, not re-rendered at the higher resolution, so don't expect to see any dramatic differences.

Photo printing – You can now print photo images stored on PS3's hard disk drive or inserted storage media to a selection of Epson printers via USB connection.

Background downloading – This is a far more convenient process for downloading content. Instead of staring at a download screen while you wait for stuff to download, up to six items from the PlayStation Store can be queued up

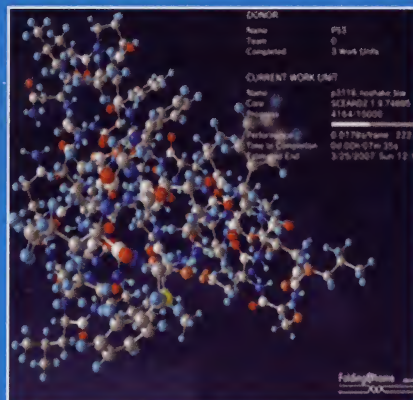
and downloaded while you play games, browse the web or use the other media functions.

Folding@home – The Folding@home project allows PS3 users to connect a distributed computing project that uses the power of idle PS3s to research protein folding mechanisms in the hope that this will lead to medical treatments for related diseases.

Remote play – This feature allows you to access photos, videos, and music on your PS3's hard drive from a nearby PSP.

Backwards compatibility – Backwards compatibility software for around 2,800 PSone and PS2 titles are now supported.

- Ability to play downloaded PSone games
- PS2 Dualshock now has 'rumble' features when used with the PS3
- Saves accrued whilst playing PSone games on PS3 can be transferred to the PSP
- "Full RGB" added to visual options for HDMI users with compatible HD TVs.



HOW TO UPDATE

Updating firmware is new to most PlayStation users so here are three ways it can be done.

1 System Update: If your PS3 is connected to the network you can easily update it via the PS3's 'System Update' feature.

2 PC: If you're not able to do this you can update it using a PC. Download the update data and save it on some form of storage media and insert it into your PS3. Copy the update data across and perform the upgrade. Download the data from here: <http://au.playstation.com/support/ps3/>

3 Games: You can update using disc media, using the firmware that is included on a game disc. We've been informed that games released post launch will feature the most recent updates available.

FIRMWARE REQUESTS

Custom music

– A handful of *OPS* readers have asked for songs from their own CDs to be selectable in-game – and we agree! How about it, Sony?

Wallpapers

– The PSP has wallpaper support. Why doesn't the PS3? It just doesn't make any sense.

Access to the Cross-Media Bar in-game

– Having to quit out to message a friend or see what your buddies are playing is a real pain in the arse.

Backwards Compatibility

– Keep it coming. There are a few local games that aren't working yet.

Any others ideas? Send them to ops@derwenthoward.com.au and we'll print them right here.

THIS MONTH'S RELEASES PUT TO THE TEST

REVIEWS

PlayStation®
Official Magazine Hosts Like

GAME
OF THE
MONTH



WELCOME

While this month is ever so slightly thin on the ground, there's going to be an explosion of hot games in the coming months. Which gets us a bit frustrated to be honest, what with all the good stuff dropping at once.

After a couple of months spent twiddling our thumbs, how the hell are we supposed to handle the upcoming assault of awesome without our brains leaking out of our ears? We really have no idea, but it's going to be fun trying...

LUKE REILLY
Reviews Editor

REVIEW RATINGS

Here's what our review scores stand for:

- 10/10** Nigh on revolutionary. A game that could change the face of gaming forever
- 09/10** A truly astonishing game. Essential fare
- 08/10** Highly recommended
- 07/10** Good, solid fare that's well worth a look
- 06/10** Better than average, and acceptable for hardcore fans of the genre
- 05/10** An average game, probably not a lot to recommend here
- 04/10** Poor, but still with the odd moment
- 03/10** Extremely disappointing
- 02/10** To be avoided
- 01/10** Beer coaster

THE OPS AWARDS

We don't hand out high scores for nothing, so when you see one of these, you'll know it's a sign of quality. Look for them on game boxes.



The Gold Award is a rare gem and only to be given to games that score that magic 10/10. This score indicates gaming of simply incredible quality!



The Silver Award is for games that receive 9/10. If you see this, it's a sign of star quality, indicating that you should buy this game now!



The Bronze Award is for games that score 8/10. These games are highly recommended and are 100% guaranteed to satisfy.

OPS REVIEW SETUP



We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Bravia X-series for the best picture possible. This sucker melts eyeballs...

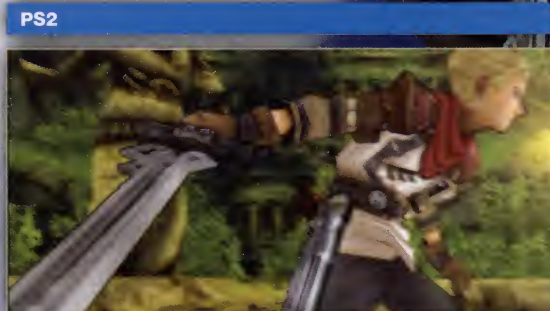
"...cinematic set pieces feature quite a lot, giving the game some much needed tension release and rampant destruction." page 86



GHOST RECON ADVANCED WARFIGHTER 2

Tom Clancy's latest roadtested. Better than Vegas? - page 86

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix
Transformers: The Game



ROGUE GALAXY

Final Fantasy XII? Eat your heart out! - page 92

25 To Life
Guitar Hero Encore: Rocks the 80s



MONSTER HUNTER FREEDOM 2

Do the Monster Mash! - page 96

Wipeout Pulse
Parappa the Rappa
Dragon Ball Z: Shin Budokai 2
Crush

■ **GENRE:** TACTICAL SHOOTER
■ **RELEASE:** NOW
■ **DEVELOPER:** UBISOFT PARIS
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** UBISOFT

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-16
■ **PRICE:** \$109.95
■ **HD:** 720p
■ **WEB:** www.ghostrecon.us.ubi.com/

■ **BACK STORY:** The Ghosts have had a rather unsuccessful life on the PS2, mainly because the titles felt like truncated versions of the Xbox ones... because they were. Now things are on an even battlefield, can the series live up to its potential?

TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON ADVANCED WARFIGHTER 2

GRAW! HUH! What is it good for? Um... quite a lot, actually

Word nerd Tom Clancy has built a veritable empire of war-based games. You've got *Splinter Cell*, *Rainbow Six* and *Ghost Recon*. Each series seems to have a special... something. *Splinter Cell* makes sneaking around a building a lot of fun, and zapping a dude with a sticky shocker never gets old. However due to the nature of the beast you can never unleash a stream of bullets, roaring some lame catchphrase, and punting a kitten through some goal posts (not that we condone that. Moving on...)

Rainbow Six is a little more kinetic, taking a first-person team through various locations (the latest one, uses mainly Vegas, in a very *Die Hard* touch) and this series suffers from a little bit too much realism. Realism's great, but at the expense of fun: not so much. However the most recent *Rainbow* (Vegas) was an absolute corker, with the Rainbow team spending most of the game's short, but tough, run time blasting it out in a casino. Giving a game a specific location, and one where the Rainbow lads wouldn't normally appear was a stroke of genius. And that brings us to *Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2* (or *GRAW 2*, which sounds like a men's

deodorant: "GRAW: for men who like to smell like manly MEN. Now available in a soothing gel!", but we digress).

SO, GIVE US THE GOOD OIL

The *Ghost Recon* team have been in many adventures. Most of them in far off deserts, foreign lands and places you'd have to eat your own tongue to be able to pronounce. *GRAW 2* is set mostly on the US/Mexican border as insurgents attempt to bring a nuke over the border or something similar, a plot that feels like it's just been pulled out of the Tom Clancy template library.

That's not to say this is a bad game. Quite the contrary – it succeeds on many levels.

The combat is a bit dicky at first, but you'll soon get used to it. At times you'll be all on your lonesome, other times you'll have a squad of three or less (depending on where you are in the single player game). You can issue the typical orders, like "come here", follow me", "go there", "take cover", "weapons free" and "bake me a pie" (fun game: pick which of those orders was bullshit).

Combat tends to be a rather distant affair with you arming your squad with high powered sniper rifles, guns and

explosives. However if you feel the need to get amongst it and actually see the white's of your opponent's eyes as you penetrate their insurgent flesh with round after round, you can do that too. Like *Rainbow Six* you'll have a medic on your team, or at least a few med kits to perform some quick battlefield doctoring.

GAME MECHANIC SOUNDS GOOD. HOW'S THE STORY?

This is where the game is let down quite heavily, sad to say. It's the typical "You have 72 hours to stop a nuclear attack on US soil!" grunty histrionics. We feel this is a step back. After *Rainbow Six*'s 'Die Hard in Vegas' and *Splinter Cell*'s morally ambiguous tale *Double Agent* – *GRAW*'s plot feels a bit old fashioned.

Happily you probably won't notice or care about the narrative as the game is engaging and damn good looking. Even running across a dusty tundra looks awesome... although that does bring us to another niggle. The majority of the fighting seems to take place in dusty tundras with buildings scattered around for cover. You'd think they'd bung on, say, a fight atop a waterfall or a collapsing warehouse that's on fire

"WE DON' NEED NO STEEKIN' GRAW!"

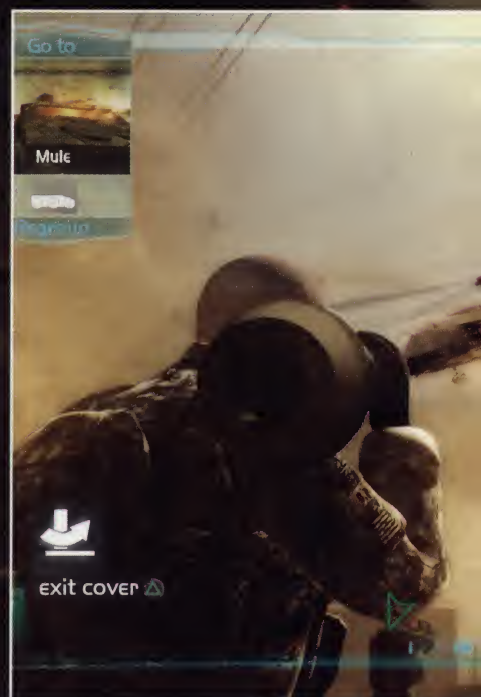
Ahhh yes, another game courts controversy by people who fail to realise the fundamental point: It's JUST A F(puppy dogs and kittens)ING GAME! At time of press the head of the Mexican state of Chihuahua is going to ban *GRAW 2* from the gaming shelves as he feels it will foster ill will between the US and Mexico. In other news just to hand: the Chimera feel they have been represented poorly in *Resistance: Fall of Man*. Tsk, FOR SHAME! Then again, what do you expect for a province named after an annoying little bastard dog?



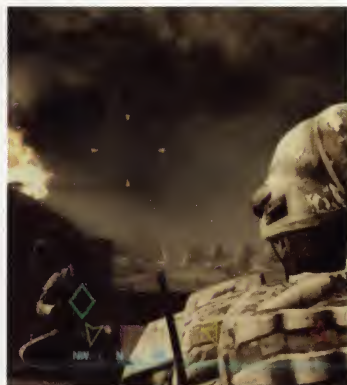
■ War screenshots: shit's always blowing up



■ "Ha HA! That got him!" "You just blew up the mess hall you moron! Who's going to make our omelettes now?"







– anything to break up the brown-hued monotony of the backgrounds.

HOW'S SHE RUN?

Smooth as silk and twice as pretty. Seriously you have never seen a game daubed in drab look so... fab! (*That's the single gayest thing you've ever said, Anthony, well done – Ed*) Your body moves like a soldier laden down with kit would move. You can crouch, sneak, lie flat and roll away from enemy fire as it stitches its way towards you. Make no mistake, this is a fantastic-looking game. Repetitive, yes, but bloody pretty.

The explosions especially are used to good effect here. You'll find yourself ducking and moving even if you do take the stealthy approach because, as in all games of this type, the terrorists seem to make it their mission to leave barrels full of explosive goo, ordinance trucks and all manner of stuff that can explode spectacularly if a few stray rounds hit it.

The enemy AI has really improved. Your squad's still a bit on the dim side, but they seem to learn how you like to play the game, which is nice. Also, you won't be finding any hostiles reporting all is well when you're standing in front of them, wondering whether or not there's

an exploding crotch animation (and there's not. We checked).

TALK TO US OF THIS MULTIPLAYER THE KIDS SEEM TO BE INTO...

Okay, we're all agreed setting C4, shooting down helicopters and blowing up tanks is fun. But when the smoke has cleared it's time to do something else. Multiplayer f'rinstance. And this, really, is where you'll find if *GRAW 2* is for you or not. Just like the rest of the game, the multiplayer is realistic, almost to a fault. The main types of games are Sharpshooter and Last Man Standing. Sharpshooter consists of respawning every time you die until a given time limit expires. Last Man Standing is just that; no respawning. Just killing. The team who has the last man standing wins. You have the choice of Rifleman, Gunner or Marksman, and also, you get your choice of four pistols.

The problems with the multiplayer mimic the problems with the main game. You'll be spending a lot of time cowering behind stuff rather than getting into a foamy deathmatch fury (e.g. *Resistance: Fall of Man* and *Rainbow Six Vegas*). Sure you can try to run out with your

guns blazing, but don't expect to stay up long. If you're the kind of player who digs slow, drawn out, tactical battles, using strategy, your trusty sniper rifle – and crawling around (always with the crawling around) – this might be for you. However for our gamer's buck the *Rainbow Six Vegas* multiplayer takes the cake. It even takes an extra slice of the cake. And maybe some ice cream on top.

OKAY, SO I'LL JUST POP OUT AND BUY RAINBOW SIX THEN...

Woah, hold on there little doggy! We haven't gone over some of the rather awesome additions to the *GRAW*-iverse. You have at your disposal (on certain levels) an airborne drone. You can command it to fly over an area and see if there are enemies lurking nearby or heavy ordinance ready to splatter you. You can actually look through the drone's camera which is very cool indeed. But don't spend too much time hovering over your foes. They tend to take a dim view of voyeurism and express these feelings with bullets.

Another nice touch is the remote control mule (a small vehicle, not an actual donkey – although that would have been neat – pulling grenades out





of a donkey's date! Come on! What's not to love?) that can bring you much needed ammo top-ups. Plus, if your men are getting a little too far away from you, you can see through their helmet cams – this both works in spying enemies and getting your mates out of the line of fire.

TO GRAW OF NOT GRAW 2?

There's a lot of buzz at the moment, the singular question seeming to be, "Should I get *GRAW 2* or *Rainbow Six Vegas*?" The answer isn't a simple one, it's more based on you. Both games feature rather short, tough and utterly engaging, single player missions. *Vegas* is probably the winner on that front but as any good writer will tell you – keeping the location of the drama centralised (in a casino, say) makes for some tense storytelling. On the flipside *GRAW 2* basically has you saving America from a Mexican incursion (see "We don't need no steekin' *GRAW*!") which certainly gives the game a more epic, if rather unlikely, feel.

Another tick in *GRAW 2*'s box is the ability to man weapons, vehicles and the like. There's an especially intense sequence where you have to blow up a bridge using a rail gun as you hang rather dangerously out of a helicopter.

These cinematic set pieces feature quite a lot, giving the game some much needed tension release and rampant destruction.

OKAY, SO WHICH WAY SHOULD I GO?

So it comes down to multiplayer. Breaks down like this; *Vegas* is more fun. it's faster, more mayhem takes place and has more of a run-and-gun vibe compared to the more deliberate slow paced *GRAW 2* style.

GRAW 2's multiplayer hasn't quite hit the nail on the head for fun and general japes, but it certainly offers a variety of gameplay options.

Our suggestion would be to play both titles – most video shops are renting PS3 games now and this is a fact you should totally take advantage of.

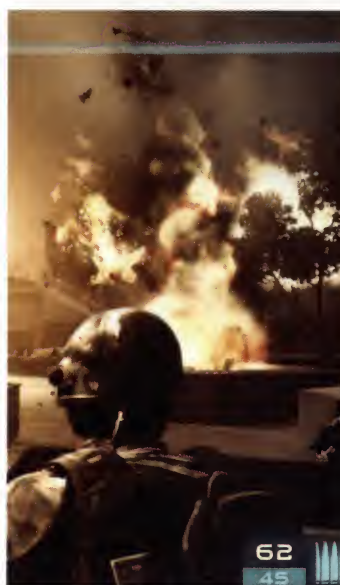
At OPS Towers we reckon *Rainbow Six Vegas* is the better of two beasties, but hell – check them both out and see for yourself. Regardless, *GRAW 2* is a fine, next gen title and now that the framework is in place we can't wait to see *GRAW 3*. We'd call it the *GRAW*-enening. Yeah.

But then, we're a bit stupid.

— Anthony O'Connor

DON'T FORGET SAM FISHER!

It's a little old now but if you didn't pick up *Splinter Cell: Double Agent* for the PS3, it's a bit of a cracker. Certainly it has the typically slow pace for this game but having the option of either playing for or against the terrorists adds some depth and makes the game so much more immersive.



PROS:

- Super-realistic
- Cool gadgets, rad graphics

CONS:

- Tough and frustrating at times
- Vegas' multiplayer is better

VERDICT: A tense, realistic shooter. Well suited for the armchair generals amongst you.

OFFICIAL
SCORE:
08

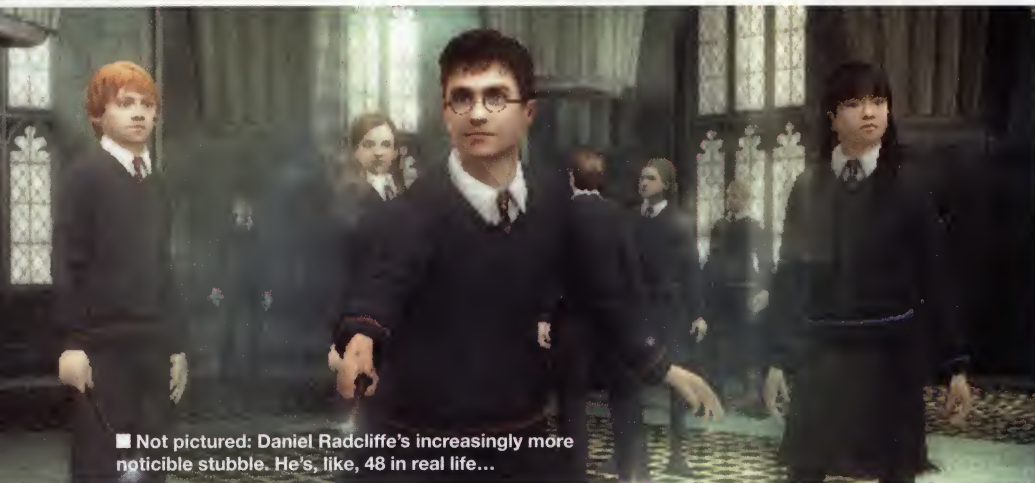
■ **GENRE:** ADVENTURE
■ **RELEASE:** NOW
■ **DEVELOPER:** EA UK
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** EA

■ **PLAYERS:** 1
■ **PRICE:** \$99.95
■ **HD:** 1080p
■ **WEB:** www.ea.com

■ **BACK STORY:** The *Harry Potter* games popped onto the PS2 along with the release of the first film, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. Since then there's been a spin off for each of the following films.



■ **Fact:** Daniel Radcliffe got his wanger out in a London stage play. *Dirty Harry*...



■ **Not pictured:** Daniel Radcliffe's increasingly more noticeable stubble. He's, like, 48 in real life...



INFO BYTE

Joanne Rowling is the first writer in history to become a US-dollar billionaire. She abbreviated her name to J.K. as the publishers feared young boys wouldn't read something written by a woman.



■ "Yeah, I learnt this cool new trick, check it out... yep, I just set the library on fire. This is not good"

HARRY POTTER AND THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX

Prepare to potter about...

To make a great videogame based on a *Harry Potter* film would be, based on market trends, a complete waste of cash. Provided the binary code isn't dangling out of the arse end of the screen, fans are going to buy the thing regardless, making the act of squeezing every modicum of blood from the developers nothing more than a sweaty-fanged labour of needless love.

It's somewhat comforting then that *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* has turned out to be, at least, a good blip of Potter paraphernalia that brings Rowling's enchanted wizard school into the next generation with confidence.

But first a disclaimer: this is not a balls-out pyrotechnic action cracker dripping with the glory of open quidditch one moment and basking amidst dragon duels the next. Instead this is a genial quest through and around Hogwarts' castle as Harry, Ron, and Hermione hang about accomplishing tasks as they build up Dumbledore's Army to combat the

rising threat of Voldemort.

It could've been compost, but instead the developers have done well with the brief – most crucially with the presentation. For one, the real McCoy's have contributed both their voices and their likenesses to the game, from Radcliffe's Potter to James and Oliver Phelps' Weasley twins. Secondly the castle has been imbued with enough fairy dust to make it play out like one of the major characters in the game – which it kind of is. Portraits demand passwords before granting access to shortcuts, stairwells hover and turn with weighted pace, suits of armour twinge on closer inspection, and house ghosts stroll indifferently. If you've ever wanted to burn about Hogwarts' Castle, *Order of the Phoenix* makes like a Snicker's bar and satisfies your hunger...

Unfortunately while these fan boons make *Order of the Phoenix* a smart bit of movie merchandise, they don't equate to a great videogame. Like many titles

caught up in the fad-like "go anywhere, do anything, anytime" manifesto underpinning contemporary development lingo, *Order of the Phoenix* is under-designed. Obviously out to appeal to as broad an audience as possible, it's more concerned with delivering fan service than a reason to play the game for more than a few hours. While it might have seemed modern to give the player a laundry list of tasks to accomplish at their leisure – which the game does shortly after the start, when you're instructed to find the 20 or so members of Dumbledore's Army littered about, dissolving any sense of structure and dramatic emphasis. It's a massive chore hop when Harry's abilities are limited to being able to climb, run, and cast a handful of spells to extrude fun.

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix could've reopened the smoky den of breezy adventure, but instead gets its head marginally over the bar as a flick of fun for Potter's patient and non-fussed fans. **James Ellis**

ROWLING HATES PLAYSTATION?

During a recent *60 Minutes* interview J.K. Rowlings stated that if her writing persuaded but one person that "a book was better than a PlayStation" her life would be validated. "I'd feel I wasn't wasting space on this earth," she added. We wonder then if the videogame rights to her series were, perhaps, accidentally unread within the small print or the franchise's feature film contract. Tucked away behind several extra zeroes, perhaps?



PROS:

- Solid recreation of Hogwarts
- Good use of the SIXAXIS

CONS:

- It all feels overly casual
- Pacing of a legless turtle

VERDICT: A decent bit of *Potter* fluff, but its chore-like structure will probably bore most.

OFFICIAL
SCORE:
06

■ **GENRE:** ACTION
 ■ **RELEASE:** NOW
 ■ **DEVELOPER:** TRAVELLER'S TALE
 ■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** ACTIVISION

■ **PLAYERS:** 1
 ■ **PRICE:** \$119.95
 ■ **HD:** 1080p
 ■ **WEB:** www.ttgames.com

■ **BACK STORY:** Those kids at Traveller's Tales are a prolific bunch – they've been churning out (mainly licenced titles) for well over a decade. *LEGO Star Wars* is probably TT's best work. *Transformers: The Game*? We guess the deadline was too tight.

PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

■ They don't make 'the sound' and you can't really leap and transform in mid-air. Sigh...



TRANSFORMERS: THE GAME

We wish this could transform into something good...

Here at *OPS* we'd all have happily traded in our existing dads to be raised by the gruff and gravely Optimus Prime. He's big. He's red. He transforms into a truck – no brainer.

Unfortunately our zeal for the franchise can't alter the flatline experience we had with *Transformers: The Game*. While it makes for a rollicking rush of sparks and desolation and features all the main players from Bay's celluloid cash machine, its dated visuals and lack of variety keep it a few tyres short of a big rig.

As expected, the game follows the plot of the film and features all the now infamous metal heads that bashed their way around the screen, including Bumblebee, Optimus Prime, Megatron – all the ones that you remember.

What's slick is that upon starting the Campaign you get to choose whether or not to control the bots of righteousness, the Autobots, or the hounds of galactic hell, the Decepticons. As children of the '80s we're at pains to

admit this, but the Decepticon missions piss lube all over the Autobots. The dark ones are encouraged to obliterate mountains of buildings and vehicles while Autobots are limited to ground-based scraps with generic decepticreeps.

Yet even controlling the slicker Decepticons, who transform into a wider variety of vehicles such as tanks, scorpions, jets and the like, the OTT action can only keep the blood bubbling for so long. Remember in music class when you were taught about dynamics? You know, if you make everything loud, nothing gets heard? That's *Transformers: The Game*. The average mission sees you guiding your bot – Autobot or Decepticon – to a location on the map, wailing away at buildings or enemies using a limited arsenal or the same melee button slog, then moving on to the next point on the map to repeat the dance. That's it – constant mashed carnage.

Fortunately, fans of the film are likely to get off on the snazzy bot models as well as the way transforming is a necessary part

of the game. It's also notably spectacular when you find yourself enveloped within the fiery insanity of an urban hellfire blender, missiles, rockets, and robots charging at you everyway but straight. Combined with the sight of buildings and bots breaking into fragments around you, along with the well-weighted amount of traffic does guarantee, at least, a few moments of action bliss.

But it's not worth getting excited about. By all means rent *Transformers: The Game* if you loved the film. The mechanical mayhem, the slick transformations and frenzy of it all make it worth a bash. However, if you're a real fan of the franchise put the purchase price towards the snazzy box set of the cartoon series and hope for a PS3 sequel that transforms into a heartier champion. **James Ellis**



GENERATION ONE AND ONLY

Those savvy blighters at Traveller's Tales have decided to serve two masters by including models of old school *Transformers* characters within the game for players to unlock and use. The first thing we wanted to know when we unlocked Megatron was what he transformed into? A tiny gun that shrinks and lands in the hands of a retro Starscream? Unfortunately, all the transformation button did was send Megatron into flight. Nevertheless, we give this bonus four thumbs up as a smart little diamond in the rough.



■ "Take that, Decepti-dumbass!"



PROS:

- Slick Decepticon missions
- It's *Rampage*, next gen

CONS:

- The sophistication of a finger painting and terrible graphics

VERDICT: Worth a nostalgic one-night stand, but that's it. Unfortunately lacking.

OFFICIAL
SCORE:
06

■ **GENRE:** ACTION RPG
 ■ **RELEASE:** AUGUST 2007
 ■ **DEVELOPER:** LEVEL-5
 ■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY

■ **PLAYERS:** 1
 ■ **PRICE:** \$79.95
 ■ **HD:** 576i
 ■ **WEB:** www.level5.co.jp

■ **BACK STORY:** Japan-based Level-5 is as independent as they come, but ties to Sony's big money mean that it has cranked out some gems. Who could forget last year's stupendous *Dragon Quest VIII: Journey Of The Cursed King* or the ace *Dark Chronicle*?



■ Futuristic motorbikes and a funky blonde bowl cut: an astonishing chick pulling combination...



ROGUE GALAXY

Final Fantasy who?

When *Final Fantasy XII* finally landed it was with a thunderous boom; the reception? Deafening. Rapturous applause. It was a 10 in the face, in the body, and its personality was equal parts witty and accommodating.

Whether the 'do-no-wrong' buzz around Squeenix's latest opus was swayed in part by the momentous anticipation surrounding its release is certainly up for debate, but one thing became clearer and clearer as the excitable reviews and loin-gurgling first impressions slowly settled: The grid-based nature of its character development scheme left little room for variety, and the

revamped, 'live' combat system – while admirable in its intent – revealed itself to be somewhat of an automatic bore. The once unassailable Square-Enix fortress now teetered slightly, vulnerable for the first time in, well, totally ages. With all the grace of the nimble software ninjas that they most certainly are, lead designer Akihiro Hino and his canny crew at Level-5 have snuck over the dilapidated ramparts with what is quite possibly one of the greatest RPGs to ever hit the PS2.

IMPROBABLY-NAMED HEROES ARE GO

Rogue Galaxy's far-reaching story

centres around Jaster Rogue, a restless, orphaned teenager wiling his days away on the desert planet Rosa. He plays against and beside the 'Luke Skywalker' archetype well – for although he's an ambitious, slightly naive hero-in-the-making with humble origins at his back and a grand destiny in front of him, there's a sense of fallibility to his every move that makes watching the sweeping narrative unfold engaging beyond the clichéd drivel we've come to expect. Mistaken for the legendary bounty hunter Desert Claw by a band of space pirates who wish to assemble an elite crew of intergalactic plunderers, Jaster's soon tripping his way



■ "How's my facial hair? 'Piratey' enough for you?"



■ A purple beard and a blonde Hitler 'tache? Now you're stylin...



■ RPG heroes – inevitably blonde and unashamedly metro-sexual. How the hell is this gimp going to save the world?

through the cosmos in the name of high adventure and a looming conspiracy. The supporting cast are uniformly compelling and well-fleshed out, and a large chunk of their appeal can be attributed to the excellent voice acting throughout. Words are phrased with such fantastic emotional inflections and attention to mood that it's impossible not to be sucked right in and that, dear friends, is exactly what makes an RPG worth the time and effort.

Whether it's the endearing Scottish cheekiness of the stumpy, rocket launcher-toting Simon or the grizzled arrogance of pitiless pirate Zegram, the characterisations are enough to keep you hooked in. The presence of a talking cat and a weapon-belching toad shouldn't deter those chasing a sincere, epic space opera – whilst there's sly humour abound ala *Dragon Quest VIII*, the dramatic undertone that drive the story forward never wavers for more than a moment.

GALACTIC DUELS

At the heart of *Rogue Galaxy*'s expansive

gameplay experience is, of course, the combat. Put simply, it's what *Final Fantasy XII*'s battle system should have been and then some. Highly reminiscent of *Star Ocean: Till The End Of Time*'s real-time engine, it dodges the encroaching ennui of *FFXII*'s auto-pilot conflicts by allowing for far more options. You're never left high and dry without a potion to get you back in the ring. Button-mashing combos, ranged attacks and a plethora of special moves that only increase as your party levels up really make it a joy to hoe through the opposition – and the ability to jump and pick up enemies and objects adds further spice to the proceedings.

The transition from exploration to fighting is simply seamless. With just a brief warning that enemies are inbound, Robert's your father's brother – your three party members are ready to duke it out. In fact, there are almost no load times at all during the entire game, which is really something when you consider that it spans six worlds and a whole lot of space in between.



■ Why does she have three different colours of hair? Who cares, she has awesome jugs

TO INFINITY... AND BEYOND!

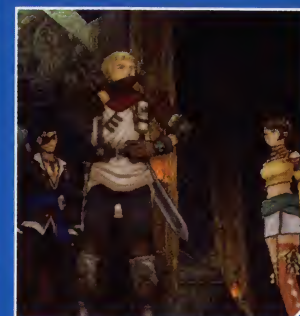
There's a lot to *Rogue Galaxy* – almost too much. Besides the overarching plot, addictive combat mechanics and obligatory side-quests, there's an extensive weapon and item creation system that opens into the proceedings. Ostensibly improving upon a similar idea seen in *Dungeon Quest VIII*, you'll be buzzing all over the galaxy searching for various odds and ends to fuse all manner of destructive devices.

As if that wasn't enough, the 'Inseccion Stadium' will sidetrack you for hours on end as you have a go at capturing and training the most kick-arse bug of them all. There's easily 80 hours of universe-romping shenanigans here for those who want to explore absolutely everything *Rogue Galaxy* has to offer. It's the last grand adventure for the proudly retiring PS2, so make the most of it. It's not hard to spend a lot of time with a game that looks this good – the gorgeous cel-shaded characters contrast perfectly with the detailed environments, and the backing scores set each world alight.

This is one RPG that can legitimately compete with the *Final Fantasy* franchise. Do you really need much more encouragement? **♪ Toby McCasker**

ANOTHER WORLD

What we're seeing is actually the 'director's cut' of *Rogue Galaxy*, which originally came out in Japan in 2005. The improvements to the international versions are mind-boggling. They include: additional weapons and items, multiple get-ups, enhanced framerates and load times, redesigned locations, and most notably an entirely new planet filled with dungeons to plunder. Other developers take note – THAT's how you port a game!



PROS:

- Awesome real-time action
- Tonnes upon tonnes to do

CONS:

- Your party can be a bit passive
- Level-grinding is required

VERDICT: The send-off to the PS2's RPGs that *God Of War II* was to the action genre.

OFFICIAL
SCORE:
09

PS3 PS2 PSP
REVIEW

■ **GENRE:** ROCK GOD SIMULATOR
■ **RELEASE:** NOW
■ **DEVELOPER:** HARMONIX
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** ACTIVISION
■ **PLAYERS:** 1-2
■ **PRICE:** \$69.95
■ **HD:** 480p
■ **WEB:** www.guitarherogame.com



GUITAR HERO ENCORE: ROCKS THE 80S

"...and ride, ride, how we ride..."

Guitar Hero Encore: Rocks the 80s is basically an expansion pack for the stellar *Guitar Hero II*. You won't need *GHII* to play it, but you will need the guitar peripheral. The modes have remained unchanged (co-op is still a feature, so East Bay Ray and Klaus Flouride wannabes are catered for) and it features all the same characters and venues, albeit with some gaudy '80s flourishes tacked on.

The song roster is solid (although it does contain a number of admittedly forgettable tracks). The set list hits critical mass further down the list with a handful

of truly memorable tunes, including 'Lonely is the Night' (Billy Squier), 'Play With Me' (Extreme), 'Ballroom Blitz' (Krokus), 'Turning Japanese' (The Vapors) and an edited (boo!) version of Dead Kennedys' classic 'Police Truck'. However, as generally blinded as we are by our love of all things *Guitar Hero*, there isn't quite enough to justify the price. There's a noticeable lack of AAA acts (probably held in reserve for the upcoming *Guitar Hero III*) and no bonus tracks.

If you're over 20 and love your rock loud, your shoulderpads proud and the left side of your face covered with glitter

— buy it. The *Guitar Hero* formula is sound and *Rocks the 80s* is still a boatload of fun. Besides, by the time you tire of it *Guitar Hero III* will be just around the corner. Remember, if this does well we might score a similarly themed *Rocks the 90s* or *Rocks the 70s*. — **Luke Reilly**

PROS:

- It's *Guitar Hero*!
- It's the '80s! What? We're old

CONS:

- Only for '80s kids
- A bit pricey for the content

VERDICT: Still great fun — but it could've had a little more to really warrant the purchase.

OFFICIAL
SCORE:

08

PS3 PS2 PSP
REVIEW

■ **GENRE:** ACTION
■ **RELEASE:** NOW
■ **DEVELOPER:** AVALANCHE
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** ATARI
■ **PLAYERS:** 1-16
■ **PRICE:** \$49.95
■ **HD:** 576i
■ **WEB:** www.atari.com.au



25 TO LIFE

Jack Thompson... all is forgiven

You know, while we genuinely believe that God kills a fluffy kitten every time noted anti-videogame campaigner Jack Thompson pulls his concerned citizen claptrap and tries to ban a videogame, we almost wish that this time round, with *25 to Life*, someone had actually taken the retarded gibbon seriously and chucked every copy of this 'game' ever made into a giant hole in the desert. That's right, Jackie boy — we're ashamed to say it, but this time, albeit for completely opposite reasons, we actually agree with you — this game should never have seen the light of day. Ban this sucker.

Games like *25 to Life* make baby Jesus cry. The design itself is pretty reprehensible, a generic clumsy rehash

of every bad third-person shooter ever made. But what riled us most was the heinous voice acting. We wish we could say it fell into the 'so bad it's funny' category but, as it stands, it firmly belongs in the 'so bad we Van Gogh-ed our ears and gouged our fingers in the bloody holes'. Yeah, we went there.

Spouting every generic 'Black' catchphrase known to man, *25 to Life*

is clichéd to the point that it's actually a little racist. It's blatantly marketed towards fans of hip-hop and hip-hop culture, but the hackneyed attempt to cater to this demographic more than misses the mark, it actually becomes pretty offensive.

Ultimately, there is not one good reason to own this game. Avoid like the plague and men with trimmed moustaches. — **Mark Serrels**

PROS:

- You enjoy pain
- You hate life

CONS:

- Where do we start?
- Trust us, it just sucks

VERDICT: Makes you want to punch babies, and that can't be a good thing...

OFFICIAL
SCORE:

03



FILM

EIGHTIES

THE DECADE COLLECTION

From Terminator to Top Gun: the High-Concept years

10 YEARS
OF RAMBO,
RAIDERS AND REAGAN



THE TEENS!

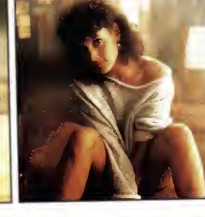
Kings and Queens
of the Brat Pack

OZ INVASION!

Mad Max and Peter
Weir bust out

THE TOP 100!

The greatest films
year by year



THE STARS THE MOVIES AND THE MOMENTS THAT ROCKED THE DECADE

ON SALE 28.08*

*popcorn not included

PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

■ **GENRE:** ACTION
■ **RELEASE:** SEPTEMBER 2007
■ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** ACTIVISION

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-4
■ **PRICE:** \$79.95
■ **GAMESHARE:** NO
■ **WEB:** www.capcom.com

■ **BACK STORY:** The *Monster Hunter* series has enjoyed tremendous success in Japan. Like its predecessor, Capcom has renamed the sequel to *Monster Hunter Freedom 2* and unleashed it upon the western world.

PlayStation
Official Game of the Year
**SILVER
AWARD**
9/10

■ Grandma... you don't look so good...

■ What is it about the Japanese and big ass swords? Compensating for anything boys?

MONSTER HUNTER FREEDOM 2

Gun + Lance = Gunlance... who would have thought?

The *Monster Hunter* series is set in a fantasy world where humanity isn't the top of the food chain, and gigantic, ferocious beasts roam the earth. The only thing that is keeping mankind from slipping into extinction are the Monster Hunters – brave souls who take up arms against the razor-fanged behemoths to protect their town. That's you, by the way. Take this pointy stick and go poke that dragon.

The visuals in *MHF2* are staggering, and even outdo the PS2 version. The environments are utterly gorgeous, in particular the jungles, and all feature environmental effects like rain. There are over 70 different types of creatures you'll encounter on your quests, and each has received considerable attention from Capcom's artists and animators.

With four new weapon classes added to the fold (to bring the total to 11), what was already an intricate, in-depth combat

system has been taken to the next level. Each weapon type offers its own pros and cons in terms of range, offensive power, and defensive options, injecting a wealth of varied combat mechanics which cater to a range of play styles.

The coolest thing about *MHF2*'s arsenal is that there's more to it than just saving up some coinage to spend at a blacksmith – it features the most in-depth crafting system ever created. Not only can you create both weapons and armour from materials you forage from the wild, or carve from the hides of wild beasts, but you can also continue upgrading your gear to keep it up to spec as the challenge steps up later in the game. While this was always the case with weapon crafting in the *MH* series, armour is now upgradeable in *MHF2* and can even be enhanced with special gems. As well as your gear, you can do everything from brewing potions to making pit traps

from recovered materials.

While you'll be set upon by all manner of beasts, the core of *MHF2* is fighting the mighty wyverns, which range in size from 'truck' to 'blot out the sun, Persian arrow-style'. While your strategies will vary depending on your weapon of choice, the wyvern battles feel a lot like the boss fights of classic games, where there are discernable attack patterns, but it still requires considerable skill to come through victorious.

While the manual camera control may prove a bit of a hurdle at first, it soon becomes second nature and you won't even think about it. That miniscule gripe aside, whether you're hooking up with a hunting party or slugging it out solo, *Monster Hunter Freedom 2* will give you at least 50 hours of play time, and that's if you just complete the basic quests. This is essential PSP gaming. A must buy for fans of the series. **Nick O'Shea**

WHAT ARE LAURELS? SERIOUSLY

Capcom has really gone to every length to refine the *Monster Hunter* formula in its latest iteration. As well as the return of four-player Ad hoc wireless play, *MHF2* features downloadable quests and other content, a background loading feature that cuts down on loading times, and much more. There's also an all-new village, farm usage has been streamlined, item chests are more prevalent for easy access, and the troublesome 'capture' and 'carry' quests are now essentially optional (and beneficial) side-missions. This bodes very well for *Monster Hunter 3* on PS3.



INFO BYTE

When rubbing the piggie, tap your foot to the beat of the tuba. When the music stops, keep tapping your foot, and on the third beat, stop for total swine satisfaction. And no, that's not a euphemism. Belay that click joke.

PROS:

- Fantastic action
- Intense replay value

CONS:

- Tricky camera system
- No real storyline

VERDICT: One of the finest games on the PSP to date. Suit up and get into the 'Hunt'!

OFFICIAL
SCORE:

09



■ Pfft, that isn't a big spider. We flushed one twice the size of that last night and we weren't even scared. We're manly

■ **GENRE:** RACING
 ■ **RELEASE:** NOW
 ■ **DEVELOPER:** STUDIO LIVERPOOL
 ■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-8
 ■ **PRICE:** \$69.95
 ■ **GAMESHARE:** YES
 ■ **WEB:** <http://eu.scee.com>

■ **BACK STORY:** Sony Studio Liverpool was originally founded in 1984 as Psygnosis, a handful of talented UK designers who many older hands will remember for the very first *Wipeout* on the original PlayStation (and its subsequent sequels).

PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

■ In the future, all sports will involve people being killed (yeah, we've seen *The Running Man*)



■ Wheels. They're so 2007...



■ "Prepare ship, for ludicrous speed. Fasten all seat belts. Seal all entrances and exits. Lock all stores in the mall. Cancel the three-ring circus. Secure all animals in the zoo..."



WIPEOUT PULSE

"Like now, like wow, wipeout, no doubt – I was gone the moment I laid eyes on you"



The original *Wipeout* – which was one of the first titles for the PlayStation all the way back in '95 – set a benchmark for slick, futuristic racing that has yet to be bettered.

The basic premise is simple: crazy speeds + crazy courses + no wheels = a whole bunch of crazy.

2005's *Wipeout Pure* delivered the experience to Sony's humble handheld admirably enough, but *Wipeout Pulse* refines the formula to near-perfection. The Race Campaign, for example, now lumps time trials, single races, tournaments and zone modes together in a grid-based system that lets you see exactly what medals you've earned and what's yet to be unlocked.

The AI in *Wipeout Pure* was impressive, not to mention dastardly to the point of aggravating at times, and here they're just as ruthless – but now

you have the option of dialling their trackside shenanigans down to easy, normal, or hard pre-race. Success, however, is still largely dependent on learning the various intricacies of whatever track's currently giving you hell and where best to slam on the airbrakes during that heinous corner so you shoot straight through into the turbo booster around the bend.

Additionally, a simple quick 'strafe' with a double-tap of the L or R button props up the race dynamics. This tiny manoeuvre means that you can pull off some pretty nifty (and dirty) tricks to keep things interesting. So the guy in front of you drops a line of mines – a quick fandangle on the L button and that pain in the arse who's been sniffing at your sparkly exhaust gets a faceful of explosive spherical death.

While things have a regular habit

of getting seriously intense, there's a curious lack of velocity at work at times. The speedometer will be reading 500-and-something km/h, but the trackside insanity occasionally doesn't match the inhuman momentum that those numbers dictate it should. Puzzlingly sluggish moments aside, the much-touted all-star electronica soundtrack is also a little suspect. On the one hand it's a great clutch of sweet beats and modern sonics from some classy artists, but in conjunction with the frenetic pace it just doesn't belong. Simply put, there are no tunes here that are going to make you want to go faster. Drop a disco bickie and make merry perhaps, but not gun it down a strip of frighteningly narrow futuristic highway at hugely inappropriate speeds.

Minor niggles aside, this is bad-arse racing action sporting a solid challenge. *Wipeout* fans: acquire. **Toby McCasker**

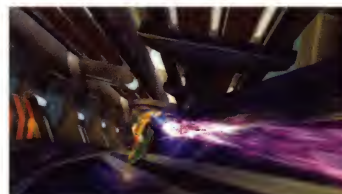
INFO BYTE

With the exception of the peaceable Harimaru lads, all the teams from *Pure* have returned. Speed demons should hop into the Piranha and never look back; guys who lack finesse should get behind the controls of the heavily shielded Triakis.

WIPEOUT.COM

Although at the time of writing it was nothing more than a domain name up for grabs (which is er, a little worrying, actually... hey lads, get a move on there, eh?), allegedly you'll be able to log on to www.wipeout.com with your PSP and download new tracks, ships, and even have a go at pimping out your ride a little with a custom paint job (why that isn't already an in-game option we don't understand, though). Sounds great – if it actually happens.

■ "They must have hyper jets on that thing"
 "And what do we have on this thing? A Cuisinart?"



PROS:

- Looks gob-smackingly ace
- The Disruption Bolt is out...

CONS:

- ...for something equally crap
- 500km/h can feel like 50

VERDICT: Fast, furious, and not for the faint of heart. Giddy-up!

OFFICIAL SCORE:

08

■ **GENRE:** RHYTHM
■ **RELEASE:** NOW
■ **DEVELOPER:** NANAON-SHA
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-4
■ **PRICE:** \$49.95
■ **GAMESHARE:** YES
■ **WEB:** www.nanaon-sha.com/v

■ **BACK STORY:** Parappa creator Masaya Matsuura was once the leader of the Japanese music group Hyper Pop Unit. His other musical projects include *Vib Ribbon* and *UmJammer Lammy*.



PARAPPA THE RAPPER

D, O double G...

Long ago, in the *before* time, people wore parachutes for pants and rapping had nothing at all to do with pimping, bling or shooting Gs in the face. It was a golden age of peaceful innocence and free-form musical expression. A time, friend, of a little hip-hop dog that "had to believe" – Parappa the rapper.

The original *Parappa* game was something of a rhythm revolution when we first sampled it on ye olde greystation back in 1997. It featured a unique art style and control scheme and the result was a fresh, toe-tapping experience that was surprisingly addictive. Essentially, *Parappa* on PSP is a remake of the original, you need to time button presses with on-screen commands to make paper-thin *Parappa* bust out the rhymes. Failure to do this correctly, or with any semblance

of coordination, can have amusing results. If you continue to rap in this fashion you'll have to restart the level.

The story, in all its quirkiness, revolves around Parappa's quest to woo his sweet heart Sunny Funny (she's a flower), while directly competing with his rival; the nefarious Joe Chin. Between the levels you're treated to cartoony cut-scenes that not only further the narrative but also serve as moral lessons for the player – which is what gives *Parappa* its charm. Unlike gangsta rap (that teaches its audience to get an Uzi or die tryin'), *Parappa* teaches people useful information – how to defend yourself, when to purchase a car, when to crap and ultimately how to win over the object of your affections; even if you're a dog and said object is a plant. Quite.

The PSP port has been given a graphical polish (including an optional 16:9 mode) and also features some multiplayer modes. But as charming and entertaining as *Parappa the Rapper* is, it still has some flaws. The game is ten years old and is considerably easier than we remembered; combine this with a very short list of songs and you have a game with limited replay potential. The developers have tried to fix this problem by providing free remixes to download; but what we really craved were some new tunes to work with.

If you missed playing the original *Parappa* you owe it to yourself to play this version. But for those grandmasters-of-funk returning for a visit, you may be disappointed – the nostalgia only lasts so long. Word. **Adam Mathew**

RAPPING PAPER

Parappa was one of the first console games to make use of an adaptive music system. An underused feature in the majority of games, adaptive music occurs when your on-screen actions directly affect the musical score in real-time (as opposed to static, pre-recorded soundtracks). It is an important element that can greatly enhance the experience of a videogame, but is something that can be quite easily missed or taken for granted. Other noteworthy examples of this immersive technique can be heard in games like *Rez* and *The Mark of Kri*.



PROS:

- Endearing paper graphics
- Amusing, trippy characters

CONS:

- Not enough new material
- A bit on the simple side

VERDICT: Great for newbies and rabid nostalgaholics, but the lack of new tracks is a bit of a diss.

**OFFICIAL
SCORE:**
06



■ Each of his muscles has an individual personal trainer. They also like different movies, which is awkward

■ **GENRE:** FIGHTING
■ **RELEASE:** NOW
■ **DEVELOPER:** DIMPS
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** ATARI

■ **PLAYERS:** 1-2
■ **PRICE:** \$69.95
■ **GAMESHARE:** NO
■ **WEB:** www.dimps.co.jp

PS3 PS2 PSP
REVIEW



DRAGON BALL Z: SHIN BUDOKAI 2

Super miracle happy kick!!! Yes very much!!!

Since this second entry in the fighting-mad *Dragon Ball Z* PSP franchise is so utterly unrelenting in its desire to cater to raging fanboys and nobody else, those not acquainted with the ginormous hair and stupendous fireballs of Goku and co. really ought to be moving right along. The reason for this is that the crux of this sequel is the story mode, which follows the exploits of Trunks as he faces off against scheming bastard Dabura through branching paths, brief overworld exploration, and the obligatory boss battle.

It's nigh-on impossible to understand a single word of the rather lame, text-based cut-scenes if you're unfamiliar

with the series, and the fact that the six new fighters in this edition are merely 'alternate' versions of existing characters simply screams fanservice.

At its core *Shin Budokai 2* is an admittedly amusing tonking game built on attractive cel-shaded graphics and tight controls. There's around fifty new moves to unlock for each combatant, and nine

booster 'slots' to upgrade their attacks with as you come across booster items in the story mode.

It makes for flexible gameplay, but even though it's hard to fault the sheer hilarity of an airborne fireball-fest, it'll be shortlived for non-fans as so much of the appeal is built on the *Dragon Ball Z* universe. **— Toby McCasker**

PROS:

- Genuinely fun fighting engine
- Fans. Will. Go. Crazy.

CONS:

- Dodgy story mode
- Little appeal for non-DBZ'ers.

VERDICT: DBZ fans will slaver with barely suppressed excitement. The rest of us won't.

OFFICIAL
SCORE:

07



■ Burning balls. He has some. Don't tell his mum

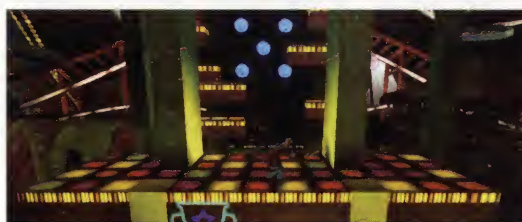


■ "Hmmm... I've got my spine, but I feel like I'm missing something..."

■ **GENRE:** PUZZLE
■ **RELEASE:** NOW
■ **DEVELOPER:** KUJU
■ **DISTRIBUTOR:** THQ

■ **PLAYERS:** 1
■ **PRICE:** \$79.95
■ **GAMESHARE:** NO
■ **WEB:** www.kuju.com

PS3 PS2 PSP
REVIEW



CRUSH

Pineapple? Orange? Neuroses?

Danny's not quite all there upstairs, and it shows. Rather than visiting a professional for his mental shortfalls, he's opted to consult a mad scientist and get hooked up to a virtual reality supercomputer in an attempt to cure his psychoses. Thus begins the patient's quest through 40 levels of puzzling to regain his sanity.

The title of the game comes from Danny's ability to 'crush' his three-dimensional dreamscape down to two dimensions. This radically changes the layout of the level, and produces many different permutations of the same elements depending on the angle you view the level from before flattening it.

While this may seem simple, working

out how to complete each level can be tougher than a handicap match against Mr. T and Hulk Hogan.

Luckily, *Crush* is pretty good about not punishing you for your mistakes, so you're given free reign to experiment without being dragged over the proverbial coals if you make a mistake. That said, you may find yourself staring blankly at the screen after a while, so the developer

has thoughtfully included optional hints, which are well stated in that they point you in the right direction for one aspect of the level's challenges while still not utterly spelling it out for you.

If you've exhausted all the puzzley goodness from titles like *Archer Maclean's Mercury*, *Mercury Meltdown* and *Exit*, then *Crush* is another good serving of your flavour of choice. **— Nick O'Shea**

PROS:

- A novel approach to the genre
- You love a challenge

CONS:

- Limited replay value
- Quirky art style

VERDICT: An innovative and interesting puzzler for those with the patience to stick with it.

OFFICIAL
SCORE:

07



FILM

Gerard Butler gets bloody in *300*, Marky Marksman hits his target in *Shooter*, Danny Boyle's *Sunshine* proves to be a real ray of light and Matt Damon remembers everything in *The Bourne Ultimatum*

DVD OF THE MONTH

300 (MA15+)

STARRING: Gerard Butler, Lena Headley, David Wenham, Dominic West

DIRECTOR: Zack Snyder

We like to think we're pretty manly. We like footy, loud cars and louder music. We can fix stuff when it breaks (or know another man who can do it for a six-pack), put up a shelf and change a tyre. We're also pretty good at opening jars. However, we've got no doubt that if we were to stand amongst the Spartan warriors in *300* for a minute or so, we'd all spontaneously sprout a pair of breasts. These guys are harder than a granite Chuck Norris statue, and twice as strong.

300 is a stunning adaptation of Frank Miller's (*Sin City*) graphic novel of the same name. As a result, the film is a visually arresting, heavily-stylised, testosterone-fuelled, blood-splattered cross between *Troy* and *Sin City*. *300* is a retelling of the Battle of Thermopylae, where 300 Spartan soldiers led by the fearless King Leonidas fought to the death against the entire Persian army.

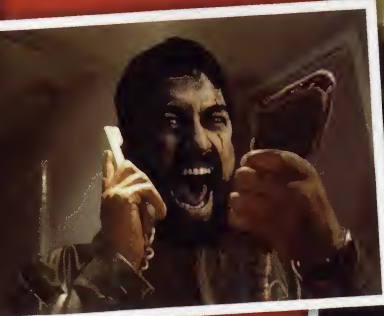
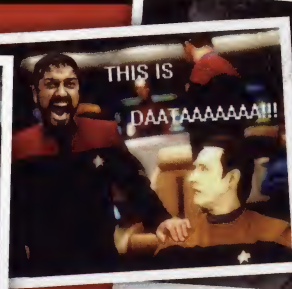
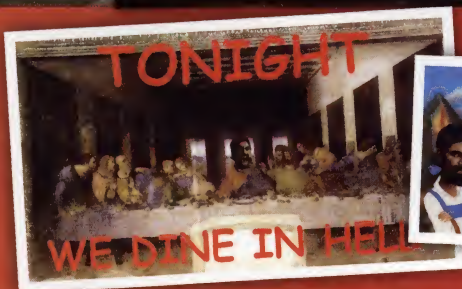
The long, unbroken action takes, the incredible choreography and the stunning CGI make *300* a visual spectacle, but it's the performances themselves that sell the story. Gerard Butler is convincing to a fault as the brave Leonidas, and Lena Headley impresses amongst a cast of almost entirely men as the steadfast wife of Leonidas, Queen Gorgo.

VERDICT: Slaughter never looked so damned pretty. *300* is a brutal, passionate and impossibly entertaining epic packed with powerful performances and ready-made movie quotes that will live on for years. Director Zack Snyder said of Dillios, *300*'s narrator (played by Aussie David Wenham), "Dillios is a guy who knows how not to ruin a good story with the truth, necessarily." The very same could be said of Miller and Snyder.

★★★★

THIS IS SPARTA!

Since the release of the first trailer, *300* has been an internet favourite – particularly amongst the geek elite. Here's a sample of the (many, many) pictures that have been gracing our inboxes for the past few months.

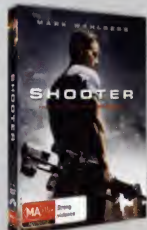


ACTION

SHOOTER (MA15+)

■ **STARRING:** Mark Wahlberg, Danny Glover, Elias Koteas, Michael Pena, Kate Mara, Rhona Mitra

■ **DIRECTOR:** Antoine Fuqua



Bob Lee Swagger, a former Marine Force Recon sniper living in self-exile after being betrayed and left for dead by his superiors, is persuaded to help stop a

presidential assassination. Unfortunately he's double-crossed and framed for the very crime he was trying to stop. Marky Marksman puts in a rock-solid performance as the gruff, capable, inventive, adaptive, but not invincible, Swagger. Likewise, Antoine Fuqua (*Training Day*) has done well, crafting a believable, right-man-in-the-wrong-place story that works its way to a very satisfying crescendo.

VERDICT: *Rambo* meets *The Bourne Identity*. The result is a surprisingly engaging, credible action-thriller.



COMEDY

MAN OF THE YEAR (M)

■ **STARRING:** Robin Williams, Christopher Walken, Laura Linney, Lewis Black, Jeff Goldblum

■ **DIRECTOR:** Barry Levinson



Good Morning, Vietnam, *Rain Man*, *Wag the Dog* – these are just a few of the Barry Levinson films that may have you thinking *Man of the Year* is sure-fire. Robin Williams, Christopher

Walken – what could possibly go wrong? Indeed. Williams plays Tom Dobbs, a comedian who decides to run for president – and wins. Robin Williams as president should be a recipe for side-splitting comedy. The problem with *Man of the Year*, however, is that it's far too uneven, nowhere near as clever as *Wag the Dog* and weakened significantly when it veers into political thriller territory in the second-half.

VERDICT: *Man of the Year* is hysterical in parts but turns out to be somewhat of a disappointment.



SCI-FI

SUNSHINE (M)

■ **STARRING:** Rose Byrne, Cliff Curtis, Chris Evans, Troy Garity, Cillian Murphy

■ **DIRECTOR:** Danny Boyle



Set 50 years into the future, the sun is dying – and it's taking mankind with it. The planet's last hope lies with eight men and women, en route to the flailing star, carrying a device

that will save it. Deep into the voyage, however, things begin to go wrong, and a distress call from a spaceship that disappeared seven years earlier only complicates things. *Sunshine* is serious sci-fi that dazzles with amazing solar cinematography but tempers it with intimate drama and a crew teetering on the brink of sanity.

VERDICT: Danny Boyle nailed gritty black comedy with *Trainspotting*, proved he could rumble with horror's best with *28 Days Later* and now shows he's at home in space as he is on Earth. A fine, thoughtful film.



GHOST RIDER (M)

■ **DIRECTOR:** Mark Steven Johnson

■ **STARRING:** Nicolas Cage



It's no secret Nicolas Cage has been gagging to play a superhero for years, but despite recently being bumped from the lead in

Superman, we still wish he'd hung on longer for a better opportunity than this. At least it looks stunning in 1080p.

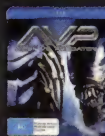
VERDICT: Cage nails the role well enough and the stunts are entertaining but it's a painfully stupid flick.



ALIEN VS. PREDATOR (M)

■ **DIRECTOR:** Paul W.S. Anderson

■ **STARRING:** Raoul Bova, Sanaa Lathan



Combining two of the most respected sci-fis in history should have been a recipe for fantastic entertainment. Unfortunately, while the setup is great the movie slumps into idiocy towards the conclusion.

VERDICT: Super crispy eye candy can't save the silliness.



TERMINATOR 2: JUDGEMENT DAY (M)

■ **DIRECTOR:** James Cameron

■ **STARRING:** Arnold Schwarzenegger



Movies do not get much better than this. James Cameron and Arnie are both at the peak of their careers in this seminal sci-fi classic. There's some noticeable film grain in a few scenes but otherwise it looks amazing.

VERDICT: *Terminator 2* is essential for any Blu-ray collection.



THE ANT BULLY (G)

■ **DIRECTOR:** John A. Davis

■ **STARRING:** Julia Roberts, Nicholas Cage



The script lacks the charm of Pixar's classics but if you're looking for a showcase for Full HD 1080p you won't find anything sharper.

VERDICT: Razor-sharp, *Honey I Shrunk the Kids*-style family fun.



THE LINE SPOKEN BY KING LEONIDAS IN RESPONSE TO THE PERSIANS' DEMAND OF THE SPARTANS TO LAY DOWN THEIR ARMS – "COME AND GET THEM!" – IS CURRENTLY FEATURED ON THE EMBLEM OF THE GREEK 1ST ARMY CORPS.

TV

THE VENTURE BROS. – SEASON 1 (MA15+)

■ **STARRING:** James Urbaniak, Patrick Warburton, Michael Sinterniklaas, Christopher McCulloch

■ **CREATED BY:** Jackson Publick, Doc Hammer



The Venture Bros. is a hilarious animated action-comedy in the vein of the classic Hanna-Barbera action series *Jonny Quest* about the adventures of two teenage boys, Hank

and Dean, their washed-up super-scientist father, Dr. Thaddeus "Rusty" Venture and their family bodyguard, secret agent Brock Samson (voiced to veritable perfection by Patrick Warburton – Puddy from *Seinfeld*). The DVD includes all 13 episodes from the first series, plus two bonus episodes, some deleted scenes and selected commentaries.

VERDICT: Packed with subversive humour and pop culture parody.



ANIME

AFRO SAMURAI (MA15+)

■ **STARRING:** Samuel L. Jackson, Ron Perlman, Kelly Hu

■ **CREATED BY:** Takashi Okazaki



Afro Samurai is what you get when you mix Japanese samurai flicks with US blaxploitation movies – a blood-soaked revenge slasher set in a futuristic feudal

Japan. A five-part standalone miniseries, *Afro Samurai* sees titular badass Afro reach the rank of #2 swordsman in the world. With the rank comes the exclusive right to challenge the #1 – the man who killed his father (the previous #1). The animation is slick and stylish and the voice work is top notch (Jackson voices the quietly spoken Afro AND his foul-mouthed alter-ego, Ninja Ninja). A visual treat from studio GONZO, *Afro Samurai* also features a hip-hop soundtrack by the RZA of the Wu Tang Clan.

VERDICT: It's like *Ninja Scroll* with more swearing and black guys.



DRAMA

HOLLYWOODLAND (M)

■ **STARRING:** Adrien Brody, Diane Lane, Ben Affleck, Bob Hoskins, Robin Tunney

■ **DIRECTOR:** Allen Coulter



Superman may be impervious to bullets, but the first man to play the famous superhero wasn't. George Reeves, the man in the tights from 1952 to 1958, was killed by a single

gunshot to the head in 1959 and his death is one of Hollywood's most enduring mysteries. *Hollywoodland* is a look at the events before and after Reeves' death and a portrait of Hollywood's treacherous underbelly. Affleck as Reeves deserves a major nod – written off by many after a string of high-profile shit, Affleck puts in a remarkably believable and deep performance as Reeves, a weary and desperate actor whose spirit was crushed by typecasting.

VERDICT: A little slow, but *Hollywoodland* is a surprisingly compelling mystery.





“Wait a minute, what’s my name again?
Damn it! I’m ALWAYS forgetting stuff!”



CINEMA

THE BOURNE ULTIMATUM (Rating TBC)

■ **Director:** Paul Greengrass ■ **Starring:** Matt Damon, Julia Stiles, Joan Allen

All the ever-forgetful Jason Bourne (Matt Damon) wanted to do was disappear, but they took his identity and the one person he loved. Lured out of hiding to meet a journalist with information about Treadstone, the agency that trained Bourne, he is once again a target. A US government official with sights on creating a new organisation, codenamed Blackbriar, dispatches a search effort to track and kill Bourne and his new ally. Simultaneously, one of the last remaining Treadstone assassins is also sent to hunt them down. Travelling across Moscow, Paris, Madrid, London, Tangier and New York City Bourne continues his quest to find the real Jason Bourne – all the while trying to outsmart and outmanoeuvre his deadliest opponents yet. Opens August 23

COMING SOON

SICKO (Rating TBC)

■ **STARRING:** Michael Moore
Following his Palme d’Or-winning *Fahrenheit 9/11* and his Oscar-winning *Bowling For Columbine*, Michael Moore investigates the US healthcare system. Opens August 16

EVAN ALMIGHTY (Rating TBC)

■ **STARRING:** Steve Carell
The sequel to *Bruce Almighty* with Steve “40-Year-Old Virgin” Carell. Opens September 6

RUSH HOUR 3 (Rating TBC)

■ **STARRING:** Jackie Chan
Chris Tucker returns to the screen after a six-year hiatus to reunite with martial arts superstar Jackie Chan. Opens September 27

SUPERBAD (Rating TBC)

■ **STARRING:** Jonah Hill
A teen sex comedy written by Seth Rogen (writer/star of *Knocked Up*) and Judd Apatow (writer/director of *The 40-Year-Old Virgin*, producer of *Anchorman* and *Talladega Nights*). Opens September 27

BUZZ

The latest movie murmurs from home and abroad



BULLITT TO THE BRAIN

Brad Pitt will star in a remake of '60s crime classic *Bullitt*. Pitt will take on the Steve McQueen role of Lt

Frank Bullitt, a tough-as-nails detective on the hunt for a cop-killing assassin. Pitt has been linked with the role since 2003 but the project has only now been given the green light. Pitt seems perfect for the role, but they’re going to need the best driving team in the business to emulate what most believe is the best car chase in cinema history.



DIRTY

Speaking of remakes, according to *Variety* writer-director Zak Penn is rewriting a remake of *The Dirty Dozen* for Warner Bros.

and producer Joel Silver. The 1967 flick was about a group of criminals on a suicide mission to kill some Nazis and is a total classic. Penn’s screen credits include *X-Men: The Last Stand*, er... *Fantastic Four* and (sigh...) *Elektra*. Hopes are not high.



KING OF COMEDY

Jonah Hill, star of the upcoming comedy *Superbad*, will be re-teaming with director Judd Apatow for *Pure*

Imagination. Apatow has a whole bunch of projects on the boil over the next few years (most as producer) including *Drillbit Taylor* (starring Owen Wilson), *Walk Hard* (starring John C. Reilly), *The Pineapple Express* (starring Seth Rogen and James Franco), *You Don’t Mess With The Zohan* (starring Adam Sandler), *Step Brothers* (starring Will Ferrell and John C. Reilly), *The Middle Child* (starring Jonah Hill and Seth Rogen) and *Year One* (starring Jack Black and Michael Cera).



DON'T CALL HIM JUNIOR

Shots of a particularly grizzly Harrison Ford sharing a motorcycle with The-Fonz Shia LaBeouf have surfaced on the

internet. The title of Indy’s fourth adventure will be revealed pre-Christmas, but rumour is it’s either *Indiana Jones and the City of the Gods* or *Indiana Jones and the Pharaoh’s Crown*.

What will your next mobile be?



Check out the latest issue of

T3

The world's No.1 gadget mag

HELP

NINJA GAIDEN:
SIGMA

Playguide Part Deux...

7 The Monastery

Fight your way upstairs – check the chests to your left and right (you should know to always check every room for chests, scarabs and arrows by now). Go to the Monk's room. Clue: 27th day of the 12th month. Key that into the safe and, using this formula (left, right, left, right) bam – there she opens. Put book of Eons on the altar. Go down the passage. Downstairs you'll fight glowing enemies, get a scarab and a map and Save. Blow up the weak looking door. Run from the giant rolling head. Spikes and collapsing columns will hinder, so this might take a few goes. Eventually you'll get to a cliff, jump out over the cavern and latch onto the rope. Chuckle as the giant head falls to become a giant pile of rubble. Fight a room full of insects and you'll get the Holy Grail for your troubles. Take the lift up and put the Holy Grail in the dusty altar. Cue: Boss fight!

BOSS: Skeletal Dinosaur (or "when museum exhibits go wrong!")

Like most of the bigger bosses in this game, this bony mongrel can talk a good game but can be beaten (relatively) easily. The thing with this cat is that he'll always have a claw near you. Ignore the rest of him and just attack that claw until the bone breaks and throbbing tendon is exposed. Do this to all four of his claws and watch him go on a little adventure... falling to his death.

8 Alma, Greater Fiend

It's another Rachel Mission and it's really not that tough (they save the brain-hurtingly painful missions for the main man). Save, get goodies, head down the wide open road. Down Drawbridge hill. Fight those big red dino-fiends. Get the blades. Go to the blue door and break it!

Follow the tunnels along. Clear the Clock Tower Arena. Out the Lily door. Fight, save, do some shopping – make sure you up your ante because it's almost boss time. Dash to the two circle green door. And meet...

BOSS: Gamov (or "that bloke with the shonky accent")

This rather dandy looking fellow can be dealt with quite easily. Stay low, dodge his bullets and hit him with charged hammer blows. He really hates that. Eventually you'll have hit him enough that he just chuckles and just buggers off.

9 Hidden Underground

Pick up the goodies, use whatever you can to embiggen your health. Head to the gate to the left of the shrine. Drop down until you hit a save point. Save or they'll make you do the whole previous level again. For real. Keep going down, down, fighting. Come to a shop. Get what you can (note:

upgrading your favourite weapon, the Dragon Sword is the smart move here. We'll tell you why later). Go to...

The Tombs of Eons

Nothing like reusing locations to make the game seem longer, eh Team Ninja? Fight zombies and will-'o-the-wisps. Down the lift: more of the same. Go to the ritual room where you will have to kill a lot, and we mean, a LOT of zombies. Again, kill archers first. After you do this (that dragon sword behead attack is your friend and don't get dozy, just because they're slow those zombies take quite a bit of killing). Drop down to corpse/shop/scarab. Bridge collapses. There are two doors. The red eye door, the blue eye door.

The red eye door: cross the water, kill the archers. Press the red button. Easy, yes?

The blue door is a little tougher. Kill the archers with your arrows (there's a nearby corpse with unlimited arrows in him. Man, someone hated that dude!). Maces swing back and forth in the room and you have to shoot – with the bow and arrow – the golden glowing things. Do them as quickly as possible. Jump across, avoid the maces and wall-run the last gaps. Press the blue button and back outside.

Jump up and get the Jewel of the Demon Seed. You should also have the Ice Storm Ninpo by now (check all the corpses). Pressure plate and into the tunnel where you'll soon be swimming. Save point and back to underwater lift. Take it up to a very familiar looking room. You know, the one with the safe. Open it. Drop into the big room with the Altar. Kill ninja and quickly pop back underwater to save. Because you're about to get your arse kicked by a girl. A flying, demonic, evil one, mind you. But still...

BOSS: Alma (or "Rachel's related to this chick? Man, Rachel got ALL the looks in that family!")

This is a really tough boss. In fact know from now on the game raises the difficulty level exponentially. So these are your tips: do a big slash move. Stay moving. You're a ninja – remember? Always be throwing something at her and slicing. Never let her rest. If you win you get to see her demonic, flouro brains gloop out of her head... which after trying to defeat her sixty times seems only fair.

10 Tairon Under Alert

Shoot off to the drawbridge. A door will slam shut. Fight the military dudes (how many genres does this game cross?) and get yourself to the Military Base Entrance via Moat Road quick smart.

Now an archer will snip at you from a window. Shoot back in first-person. It's

easier than it sounds. Work out where he's shooting from and let him have four well-placed arrows. Here on the Xbox version you would now get the Strong Bow. But this is *Sigma*. The boffins at Team Ninja have obviously sat around, scratching their chins thinking: "How can we make this already hard bit absolutely merciless?" They do so by chucking in a BOSS FIGHT!

BOSS: Alternator (or "metal bloke with the nasty guns' er... brother?)

Yep, without throwing you a save point you have to beat turret dudes, army dudes, archer dude and now this big metal dude. He's tougher than the other one. He shoots red plasma so you know it goes faster (geddit?) he's also harder to judge and uses his shield more often. Roll around a lot and use weaker combos. It sounds strange but you'll get them in more quickly thus dealing out more damage. He's more annoying than hard, just keep moving. Then, when he's dead, the Strong Bow just appears magically in front of the gate you can now open. Yep. Nice and logical, that one. Anyway, have a beer. Level's done.

11 Military Supply Base

There's almost no way to get lost here. Enter. Kill soldiers. Go to the warehouse – collect goodies and key card. Shoot out your doom Frisbee to kill the mini-copters. Inside the warehouse is a pretty lame, and easy, platform jumping sequence. Go to control booth, get map and card. And head out into...

The Train Yard

Where two MINI BOSSES in the form of two tanks attack

There are crates that refill your armour piercing and explosive arrows all around the battlefield. You could try to shoot the bloke whose head pops out of the tank, but it's so much more fun shooting an explosive arrow of mid-air and taking out those tanks Ryu-style! Go up the lift and save.

Be ready to fight a third mini boss in the form of a gunship

As you cross the bridge you'll face a helicopter gunship. This is a matter of learning its patterns and when its near the bridge unleash arrow fury. Rinse and repeat and soon this gunship will be a smouldering ruin. Head to where ninjas attack you against the backdrop of a massive communications tower that's also covered with ninjas all shooting at you. Use your arrows to blow up the communication dishes.

The door unlocks after the dishes are dust, so dash decisively through the different door and save. Kill the bazooka packers, get the key card and move the train with the lever. Now mission 11 is done, son!

12**The Aquaduct**

This level can be long and kind of a pain (thanks to re-spawning enemies). Anyway, you enter the sewer via the manhole and start fighting some cool looking slimy monsters. Nab the Red Tablet and head to the Hall of Balance. Grab the Insect Key and dash to the first electric worm mini boss...

MINI BOSS - Worm, single but looking...

Apart from being told it looks like a doodle, this worm really hates being slashed in the air the most. It goes, erm... limp for a while after that so you can slap it then. Watch out though when it gets up, it's angry and will electrify the water. A nice tough fight.

Now grab the Water Statue and open the door, use the Red Tablet and head for the other side of the Aquaducts. Dash for the Water Statue. Hoon to the door and insert the statue. Now you're going to want to get the Blue Tablet of the Stream. Jump down to the Underground Waterway. After a bit of fiend bashing, by golly, it's another...

MINI BOSS - Two Worms, together

This battle can really suck. The worms have three or more attacks. They can just turkey slap you, spit on you (settle down), make the water electric or eat you. The eating one is to be avoided. The best strategy is to attack one worm like the other one isn't there. Shortly (if you're nimble and have plenty of Ninpo) you will have to face



just the one and that's not so hard. Still, expect to die a bunch of times. After this perform various acrobatic feats to get to the save point in the cracked ceiling. Use it and face...

BOSS: PAZ ZUU (or "look at the size of that thing!")

If you thought running up the walls and jumping on the ledges to save before this fight was hard you... are actually right. Getting to the save point is harder than this boss. He's sort of a giant, demon, bat, monster thing. He latches onto a surface and shoots a laser beam at you. Duck that, as it's his most powerful attack. Stay as close as you can and chip away at his mighty girth. He has another attack where he hovers over you, doing damage with his bird-like talons. Turn it back on him by using the pillar of Ice Ninpo, he hates that.

13 The Path to Zarkhan

*Note: this is the level with the fish cheat. You will love us after you hear about it. The rest of the level is pretty simple (note we said simple, not "easy"). Basically you have to go over and under water, collecting keys and other things. You'll get a spear gun that can only work underwater. But to be honest we recommend hooning through this level when you can (you'll find a breathy-under-water-thingy in a sunken ship).

Okay, so here it is. You'll find yourself in a watery bit where the skeleton you killed earlier lies in pieces (nice touch, guys). Down the hole there's a room with a whole bunch of those evil fishies and a lift. You can keep going, insert the medallion you got a little earlier and face the boss...

OR you could do the "Fishy fishy foo!" move. Read on...

See, the fish are really easy to kill and

did you notice how much yellow (gold essentially) essence they leave behind? Lots. Especially if you're wearing the bracelet that encourages wealth. Okay, so you clear out the room. No biggie. But if you swim back the way you came, not far, just to get out of eyeshot, and swim back in - all the fishies are back. We're not even sure we could have finished the game without this cheat. We went back and forth dozens and dozens of times. We maxed out all our weapons. Maxed out health, magic, resurrection spells, even that stupid wooden sword that becomes an insanely powerful - if ungainly - paddle weapon. We also left ourselves with about 100,000 gold glowy things. To be honest we'd suggest you'd double that. The game's not getting any easier, trust us, so any upper hand you can get - take it. Then...

BOSS: Doku (or "Darth Purple")

Doku is hard. Even with every single attribute of our character pushed to the limit our first encounter with him consisted of us weakly stabbing him and being demolished by a combo of magic and cold steel. See in *NGS* the human-sized opponents tend to "bring it". You should have oodles of health and magic. Use them. Block his attacks when you can and hit, block and roll. Hit, block and roll. The problem is he gets hip to your technique so will adjust accordingly. Using the once crappy wooden sword will take a lot of damage so give it a go. Expect this to be a fairly epic fight. Oh, and try not to kill Rachel by hurling something sharp at her. It's game over then too.

14 The Ancient Twin Deities

It's a Rachel mission! See Ryu didn't kill Lord Doku (man, the big bosses in these games never die the first,

like, fifteen times you kill them!). You'll fight new enemies like ugly ogres. Quest through and get into the teleporter...

...and end up in the village. Go through the graveyard, cross the bridge where Ryu fought horsey boss. Shop 'n save first though. Prepare for a massive battle on the bridge. Ninjas in armour and mages make this a bad time. Rachel's slow because of her weapon and her magic is very limited so go for the kill every time. If you just wound a mage, there's a good chance they'll zap ya when you're getting up. After fighting for what seems like hours a box will appear. Surely this must be the weapon of ages?! No, it's one of like four wigs Rachel can get. Wigs. Seriously. We'll say it again. Wigs. Back out, shop/save. Jump over the wood near the shop. Go in the door and remember where Ryu first got his bow and arrow. Awww, memories. Climb ladder. Go outside for yet more fighting. Go up the hill and smash the rock. Get stone tablet and use it on the pedestal. New teleporter is activated. Hop in... and face glowing-headed fiends and a rhinoceros-looking dude. Just keep your distance, hack, occasionally whip and use Ninpo. A new teleporter appears. Use it. Save. Walk and then be zapped into what looks like a Megadeth, or earlier Slayer, album cover. Rachel's evil sisters all attack. And you're gunna die - it's basically an interactive cut-scene you can't win.

15 The Caverns

We were able to go back and do the fish cheat before moving on, which was cool as we'd used a lot of health and magic on the Doku fight.

Anyway, move through the stadium (you'll now have a sword that is fast and swallows souls, max it. It rules). In the arena go to the switch room and move the platforms. Before you can use it, however, red fiends appear. Why not show off what your new sword can do and kill them and take their souls? The essence collecting attack works wonders, as does the electric magic (don't forget to shake the controller like it just burnt your porn stash!). Exploding arrows and such work well also. Lots of the beasts appear so treat this as a marathon and not a sprint. You can also throw your new sword Doku-style. Eventually they'll die and a chest will appear. Get it and climb the walls, reaching the hard to get chests. It's worth it as your magic will get upgraded. And then you can STILL go back and do the fish trick.

In the switch room, climb the inscribed stairs, open the chest, kill demons. Save over water, there's a chest underwater and a scarab. Enter the cave. It's bloody bat city here! You'll find a soldier with a map (about time!) and soon be in a battle royale with bitey red friends and slimy beasts. A stern essence charged attack with the boat paddle of doom (what we're calling the massive, ungainly but insanely powerful wooden sword, all grown up) you should fix them. Flip out to the chest. Find the room that's used for metallurgy. Get the Shield of

Vigour. Back to the door near the save. Insert the shield and welcome to...

The Magma Cavern

Talk about fire and ice. This place is hotter than hell. Here you'll find the last piece of the tablet you've been collecting throughout the game. Press giant switch by whacking it so you can hop across the lake of fire. Save at the locked door. Follow the level around and see the wall that seems to be sitting in the middle of nowhere. Wall run it, jump the pit of fiends, dash up the see-saw thing and enter...

The Ruins

Pour lava into the cog hole. You have made the Cogs of Vigour. Smash the ice and drop down into a big cavern. There's this big MINI BOSS snow beast... thing. It looks really cool. It's basically a woolly torso with a mouthful of drool-flecked teeth. Just stay ahead of him and you can take him down with little trouble. Get the eye of ice, hold it up to the door. Enter. Go back to...

The Magma Cavern

Except instead of indulging in rather unlikely gymnastic moves - save - and you use the cog to enter the room.

Room of Worms

Two worms, one energy bar. Get out the paddle and make worm paste out of them. Then back out, save and shop (if you need to). Then back in and enter...

Hall of the Flame Dragon

Get the Devil Deity of Immortality trophy and wake up...

BOSS: Big Dragon (or "nup, it's a big dragon. I've got nothing.")

He's big, but you're tough too. Platforms will rise and fall and he'll often be close enough to hit. If not, use your sword throw. Basically if you avoid his plumes of flames and slappy tail you can tame this impressive-looking behemoth in no time. When he goes down you can use his corpse as a conveniently placed bridge. Also a tennis court. But that would just be stupid.

16 The Fiendish Awakening

Walk along, fight bats, get map from dead ninja. In the tall room wall run/jump/wall run/jump, etc. all the way to the top. What look like winged scrotums with "stingers" will try to stop you but they're easy killed... if a little off putting. At the top you'll be in...

The Underground Waterway

Basically you want to go up, up, up. You have the tablet to use in Twin Serpents Plaza now so go up young man. Lots of re-used enemies here, but you can run past them if you feel you're tough enough. Finally - press the drawbridge switch, fight off zombies, go through the blue circle door, use incendiary darts on the cracked door (bet you were wondering about that) and you'll find yourself in...

Twin Serpents Plaza

Use the tablet. Watch the light show. Take the teleporter. After an AWESOME cut scene in the grave yard your Dragon Sword becomes True Dragon Sword. Almost like a light sabre. Jump wood, fight if you want, otherwise just run to the village's teleported and ZAP... to the now unlocked door... ZAP... to the Temple of the Netherworld.

Cut scene leading to mid-level boss battle.

BOSS: Alma (or "I swear I knocked that chick's brains out!")

The True Dragon sword now does a slash that can really mess up a fiend's day. Still, this isn't an easy fight. Alma is far from happy with you, but the way to fight her is pretty much the same. Avoid her damaging attacks, hack her mid-air and when she's on the ground? Lay the boot - or glowing samurai sword - in.

17 Vengeful Spirit

This is probably the most annoying level of the game.

After you fight three big arse demons one after the other you activate the moonswitch. Go through the door, run down the hill - there's a room where you can shop, get goodies and save. Note: there's a locked door with a griffon symbol. Use the transport. Kill some baddies in the fiend realm, get the griffon key, transport back out and open the griffon door. Sounds easy right? WRONG. You're now in a labyrinth full of enemies who want to suck your health out so you'll be dry for the final fight. Especially those damn fish things that latch onto you and won't let go. Use the nun chuck-things lots. Speed is the key here, not dignity. You want as much health, and resurrection spells as possible. Meet the cat people. Kill the cat people. Open the Lion door. Get lost at least three times (you just will, sorry) then find the Lioness Key for the Lioness door. Open and face...

BOSS: Doku's ghost (or "Hey, didn't I already kill you?")

This guy's actually not that hard. He sure as hell doesn't match Doku in the flesh. You'll want the dragon sword, we reckon. Big slashes between his attacks. And, as per, never stay still. Poor old Doku. But then you get turned into a fiend, by golly! If you don't stop the evil soon... you'll become a FIEND.

18 The Core

Take Raptor Deity of Sentiment. Go to the Palace Compound. NOW they'll give you a map of the labyrinth but, really, do you want to go back? Go to door. Cue: cut scene and get the Key of The Decayed Soul. Cross the acid-flash-back causing bridge of skulls (it really is creepy) and enter...

Core of the Imperial Palace

Basically the next few levels consist of you putting the statue in the core of the room and fighting different monsters. You can stay and fight, or you can just bung in the statue and move on. Depends on

what rating you want and how much health you have left. Also, those bloody fish are back on the stairs. Be ready. Also if you wish to just run past the monsters, horned demons will try to drag you down levels. You've been warned. Up, place statue, up, place statue, up and so on UNTIL you get to the...

The Gates of Hell

The top level. Save. You need another idol. Search for chests (there should be two with health). And er... touch the incredibly self-indulgent Team Ninja monolith. It's good for what ails ya! Now for the boss fights (yep, plural).

A big arse, laughing demon will make fun of your pants (not really) but will send you on a magical tour. Instead of being full of wonder of joy, it's full of monsters and crying. Oh well,

STOP ONE: Hydracubus (still slimy, still ooky)

Same way you killed it before.



STOP TWO: Shaggy Snow beast redux (still looks cool, still piss easy)

Just don't let it sit on you.

STOP THREE: MAIN BOSS

Just keep moving and use Ninpo when he fires at you. Now you can relax—
WHAT THE???

RANDOM BOSS JUST TO PISS YOU OFF! (#1)

Suddenly, for no reason, you are transported onto a little platform. You can move this platform up and down, in and out. You are fighting a creature with the face of an angel but a huge icky demon body. First attack the blue pustules on the arms, then the head. Seems easy enough. Then the angel... thing starts throwing these plasma balls around. You can try to dodge them but for us this was the hardest fight of the game. Hours it took us – because we didn't want to use any resurrection spells. We figured we'd need all three (the max) for the end boss (we figured right). Oh, did we mention straight after the Angel Beast you fight...

RANDOM BOSS JUST TO PISS YOU OFF (#2)

Imagine a giant spider made out of skulls. That's what you're fighting. Of course you're on a bunch of small islands in a sea of lava. Joy! Okay, use your bow but try to save the explosive arrows for the last boss. As the skulls become pink they're about to launch at you. Bow as many as you can then when they're all around you and there's just too many to hit – use a Ninpo that has a wide radius of destruction (like the electric one). And shake that SIXAXIS. Shake it hard for better results. This will have hurt

the beast but not killed it. You might have to do this a couple more times. If you're lucky – and this just seems to be random – he'll jump out of the lava and onto an island. He won't be there long so dash over and either combo the shit out of his legs and lower body (he's big) or launch an awesome Ninpo that will consume his whole body and kill him dead, dead, dead! YES! YES!

19 The Dark Dragon Blade

Okay, this is it: the final level. But before you battle the mysterious – and hard – final boss you'll finally get to do some good platforming. The cave you're trying to get out of is falling apart (stay too long and be crushed). So run, climb, swing acrobatically off a spiky branch, climb up three cliffs – leap off the furthest edge of the third... onto a lower platform. Climb the wall in front of you, turn left and spy a rope swinging down. Run towards it and jump. Cue cut scene where you'll finally meet the melon farmer who has been putting you through all this...

SPOILERS! UNLESS YOU'RE ACTUALLY STUCK ON THIS BIT, DON'T READ IT, OK?

...the final boss is...

FINAL BOSS: Murai (or "He's the guy I fought at the end of the FIRST level! WE WERE MEANT TO BE FRIENDS!")

Yes, Murai has been wanting to possess the Dark Dragon Sword... for some reason. Anyway, it's changed him from a fat jolly dude with nun-chucks into a three-eyed purple beast. Techniques vary with this punk. The Dragon Sword's probably your best bet but whenever you jump, and you should jump a lot, when this guy grabs you pain ensues – shoot explosive arrows at him. Run out of them? Throw whatever you've got at him. He has a few attacks. All of them brutal. He can impale you on his sword (half health gone) he can squash you into the ground (ouch) and he can stand at a distance and launch a dark dragon spirit from his sword (not that hard to dodge, but a bitch if it hits you). Anyway, combo after he's done something big. Hopefully you'll have your resurrection spells. Don't try to jump attack him, he'll just flick you out of the air. Stay low, stay fast, stay nasty and if you're on a roll – go with it but then get out! Remember, if he beats you, you have to do that whole *Prince of Persia* bit again. Good luck, ninjas. ♪ Anthony O'Connor

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CHEATS

Get the winning edge
with *OPS'* tricky cheats

PS3 PS2 PSP

THE DARKNESS

Entire in-game movie

About three hours into the game, after you pass the cold storage part, you'll end up in a hallway with a lot of doors you can open. The middle door will have some computers and an enemy that never heard the gunfight because he is watching a television with some headphones. Kill him and the television will be yours to use. The option to change the channel will be given to you. Change the channel and some music videos and cartoons will pass. Wait a few seconds to see what is coming on next. There will be one with some cheesy music and words, and white lines coming out. This is actually a movie from 1955 called *The Man With The Golden Arm* starring Frank Sinatra. You can watch the entire movie on this television.

Unlockables

Dial these numbers at any telephone to unlock new darklings.

Unlock 2K Sports Darkling

555 4263

Unlock Golfer Darkling

555 5664



PS3 PS2 PSP

EVERYBODY'S TENNIS

Unlockable characters

In challenge mode, defeat the character listed in a singles game to play as them

Big Chief

Defeat Big Chief in challenge mode

Carol

Defeat Carol in challenge mode

Gloria

Defeat Gloria in challenge mode

JJ

Defeat JJ in challenge mode

Jun

Defeat Jun in challenge mode

Kaito

Defeat Kaito in challenge mode

Kent

Defeat Kent in challenge mode



PS3 PS2 PSP

NINJA GAIDEN SIGMA



Golden Scarab Rewards

By collecting a certain amount of hidden Golden Scarabs, Muramasa (shop owner) will reward you with items and weapons that will help you in the game. There is a total of 50 Golden Scarabs in the game.

Note: There are NO Golden Scarabs when playing as Rachel.

Armlet of Fortune

Collect 40 Golden Scarabs

Armlet of Potency

Collect 5 Golden Scarabs

Dabilahro

Collect 20 Golden Scarabs

Great Spirit Elixir

Collect 35 Golden Scarabs

Jewel of the Demon Seal

Collect 45 Golden Scarabs

Life of Gods

Collect 1 Golden Scarab

Lives of the Thousand Gods

Collect 10 Golden Scarabs

Plasma Saber MkII

Collect 50 Golden Scarabs

Spirit of the Devils

Collect 15 Golden Scarabs

The Armlet of Benediction

Collect 30 Golden Scarabs

The Armlet of Celebrity

Collect 25 Golden Scarabs

Extra Costumes

You can unlock extra costumes by beating the game on various difficulties

Ashtar Ryu costume

Beat story mode on the hard difficulty setting

Classic Ryuken costume

Beat story mode on the normal difficulty setting

Extra Missions

5 extra missions in Mission Mode. On the mission mode screen Press:

↑, ↓, ←, →, ↑, ↓, ⊕



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INTERACTION



You want action? We'll give you action with this **300** prize pack. Featuring Gerard Butler and David Wenham **300** is the retelling of the battle between 300 Spartans and the massive Persian army. With muscles aplenty and amazing visual effects and scenery **300** really is a must see.

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ARCHIVE

All the games that matter on the PS3, PS2 and PSP!

FUTURE WATCH

The PS3 games to grab in the coming months

GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

Release: October

If you're one of those people who put kids, food and bills before casual spending and can only buy one game this year, this is the one you need. This way, as you cry yourself to sleep over not owning *Rock Band*, you'll at least be able to say you own the game of the decade.

HAZE

Release: November

Four-player co-op play. Really, that's all we should need to say. A 'serious' shooter from those crazy cats at Free Radical (creators of *TimeSplitters*), *Haze* is one slick looking shoot 'em up set over a three-day period in 2048. *Resistance*'s days as the PS3's top FPS are numbered...

MERCENARIES 2: WORLD IN FLAMES

Release: Late 2007

After E3, we are all OVER *Mercenaries 2*. There is certainly no shortage of distinctly GTA-flavoured up-and-comers, but the combination of *Mercenaries 2*'s bunker-busting weaponry and sheer capacity for destruction makes it the most exciting of the bunch.

ROCK BAND

Release: Late 2007

No, we're not going to stop talking about this one either. *Guitar Hero* creator Harmonix has a brand new bag, and it's called *Rock Band*. Believe the hype, because this sucker is going to seriously rock. Oh yeah, Metallica are in *Rock Band* too – did we mention that? "Exit lllllight! Enter nllllight! Take my haaaaaand – off to Never Never Land..." Ahem...

PS2

"A lot was made of *Tomb Raider: Legend* being a return to Lara's roots, but *Anniversary* is the true owner of this accolade."

OFFICIAL SCORE:
09

TOMB RAIDER: ANNIVERSARY

BURNOUT DOMINATOR

8

The reduced price-tag is tempered by the lack of crowd faves like Crash Mode, but it recaptures *B2*'s speed and *B3*'s intensity.

EVERYBODY'S TENNIS

7

Its lifespan may be short, but it's possibly the ideal family game that will put everybody on level pegging skill-wise.

FINAL FANTASY XII

10

This is the most superbly crafted RPG out there. You'd be completely mad to miss this one.

GOD OF WAR II

10

There is no reason not to own this game. Whack on some pants and go buy it now.

GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY STORIES

9

No multiplayer or co-op, but a big improvement on *GTA: Liberty City Stories*. A fitting last hurrah. Can you feel it, coming in the air tonight?

GUITAR HERO II

10

Guitar Hero II is arguably the greatest PS2 game of 2006, and undoubtedly the gnarliest music game ever made.

MEDAL OF HONOR VANGUARD

6

A bit of a minger that fails to halt the franchise's fall from grace. Sticky controls and a lack of any original ideas signal a rushed product.

RICKY PONTING INTERNATIONAL CRICKET 2007

8

An under-featured update of the PS2's best cricket game, but still an absolute cracker.

SBK-07: SUPERBIKE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP 2007

8

A realistic and credible take on motorcycle racing, highly recommended for bike buffs.

SOCOM US NAVY SEALS: COMBINED ASSAULT

8

A solid tactical shooter – but it lacks any real progress from the last *SOCOM* game.

PSP

AFTER BURNER: BLACK FALCON

8

Cool, arcade-inspired action – faster than a whippet on 'roids.

CHILI CON CARNAGE

6

Good humour, dodgy controls. This chili needs a few more habaneros.

DRIVER 76

7

A heady mix of *Parallel Lines*' best bits, *Driver 76* breaks new ground for itself but not the genre.

GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY STORIES

10

Not only is this a brilliant game, it's arguably the second best *GTA* game available next to *San Andreas*. Get it now.

METAL GEAR SOLID: PORTABLE OPS

9

Forget *Ac!d*, this is the game *Metal Gear* fans have been waiting for.

PRINCE OF PERSIA: RIVAL SWORDS

9

A top-rate conversion that stands up to its PS2 big brother.

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 6

8

Fun, easy to play and challenging enough to offer real longevity.

ROCKY BALBOA

6

Likely only to disappoint fans of the movie. Shallow boxing mechanics and a general lack of depth illustrate an ultimate waste of the license.

V8 SUPERCARS 3: SHOOTOUT

7

It looks good, it sounds good and it has a stack of options – but the handling is more arcade than sim.

VIRTUA TENNIS 3

7

Quick, slick and a joy to play – just a few frame niggles.

RATCHET & CLANK: SIZE MATTERS

"Faithful to the series and a hoot to boot – nice."

OFFICIAL SCORE:
08

PS3

ARMORED CORE 4 7

A very respectable mech game and a far better alternative to *Mobile Suit Gundam: Target In Sight*.

BLAZING ANGELS: SQUADRONS OF WWII 7

It's not without its flaws, but if you want a whiff of the air up there you could do a lot worse.

CALL OF DUTY 3 7

Call of Duty 3 is a solid but surprisingly unspectacular shooter. Grab a copy of *Resistance* instead and wait for *Call of Duty 4*.

DEF JAM: ICON 8

There's a lot to dislike about this game, yet somehow it's won its way into our hearts. Stupid fun. Holla back! And so forth.

THE DARKNESS 9

Stunning, original and gory as hell. You'd have to be dim to miss *The Darkness*.

THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION 10

One of the deepest adventures we've ever laid eyes on. Simply put – awesome.

ENCHANTED ARMS 8

Enchanted Arms is the first proper Japanese RPG for the PS3 and it's by no means a disappointment, but it's a quirky game.

F.E.A.R. 8

F.E.A.R. is a seriously chilling ride but the graphics could've been a LOT sharper.

FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 3 8

Still one of the best two-player games around, with visuals that will knock the wind out of you.

FORMULA ONE CHAMPIONSHIP EDITION 9

F1CE looks awesome and plays just as well. F1 fans, you have been called.

FULL AUTO 2: BATTLELINES 7

Battlelines is a game that brims with potential but fails to live up to it. Shallow fun if you're up for it.

GENJI: DAYS OF THE BLADE 5

Flashy graphics can't hide the plodding gameplay that belongs on the Atari 2600.

MARVEL: ULTIMATE ALLIANCE 9

It's next gen as all hell. On PS2 it was damn good – on PS3 it's a must-have!

MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM: TARGET IN SIGHT 3

A rubber Godzilla of a title that looks uncooked, plays stiffly and provides no satisfaction. What a pipe blocker!

MOTORSTORM 10

Fast, hard, dirty and utterly exhilarating, *MotorStorm* is essential for everyone's PS3.

NBA 2K7 8

Technically the best b-ball sim on the street, but that won't mean much to average punters.

NBA STREET HOMECOURT 8

Homecourt is the brashest, most addictive arcade basketball game yet. Instant fun.

NEED FOR SPEED CARBON 8

A bit more Paul Walker than Vin Diesel, but still a solid racer and worth a look for series fans.

NHL 2K7 8

A snappy hockey game with everything a fan could want, unless you already own the PS2 version.

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: AT WORLD'S END 6

A very shallow slash 'em up that looks the part, but doesn't feel or play the part. Frustrating. Ye be warned.

RESISTANCE: FALL OF MAN 10

The perfect launch title for PS3, and possibly the best console FPS ever made.

RIDGE RACER 7 9

Faster, sexier and more gravity defying than Jessica Alba bungee jumping. The best *Ridge Racer* yet!

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 4

This is an absolutely terrible game. Atrocious controls, poor camera, bestiality – avoid at ALL costs.

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 07 9

A solid step forward for the best golf franchise in gaming. Tiger's never looked so good!

TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX VEGAS 9

This Vegas adventure is definitely worth a look. A slick, gorgeous, accessible and utterly entertaining tactical shooter.

TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL DOUBLE AGENT 9

Obsessive and gripping both online and off, *Double Agent* will gobble you up. Obtain.

TONY HAWK'S PROJECT 8 7

Slick new visuals but still the same old skating and a severely downsized create-a-park feature. Neversoft needs to improve.

VIRTUA FIGHTER 5 8

VF5 is as hardcore as fighting games get. Serious fans – start rolling up your sleeves.

VIRTUA TENNIS 3 8

Still the best tennis game around, but the lack of any significant new features is a downer.



PlayStation
Official Magazine Australia
BRONZE AWARD
8/10

WHY GET IT?

- It's harder than a coffin nail
- It's longer than *War and Peace*
- The ninja combat kicks ass
- Fiend hunter Rachel has enormous bosoms
- ...and they move like a candlelit tide

VERDICT: *Ninja Gaiden Sigma* is a treasure chest of gaming goodness. Dig it up now.

OFFICIAL
SCORE:

08

MAGIC MOMENTS

Great moments in PlayStation history remembered!



THE GAME: *Red Faction*
THE CONSOLE: PlayStation 2
THE YEAR: 2001

THE MOMENT: *Red Faction* was the first-person shooter to own on PS2 for a long time – early proof last generation that after a solid start, the FPS genre on console was here to stay. Even today, despite its comparatively dog-ugly appearance, it's a slick shooter that controls remarkably well. But onto the moment in question...

It occurred relatively early on to be honest – and it involved a rocket launcher. *Red Faction* was an extraordinarily generous game, and instead of having you wade through hours upon hours of gameplay before handing you something big and explosive (20 minutes from the end of the game) Volition dished out the good stuff early.

It was a good one too, because it let you blast the crap out of walls.

We feel like we've harped on a fair bit about *Red Faction*'s revolutionary GeoMod technology over the past few months, but it's only because we're becoming increasingly astounded it's taken this long for developers to get back on board. *Battlefield: Bad Company* will be around 90% destructible, and *Mercenaries 2: World in Flames* features demolition of a grand scale.

But why did it take so long?

Red Faction's most magic of moments, however, occurred when you were faced with a heavily armed drilling machine creeping along a rock bridge in a massive underground cavern. You appeared above it, on a narrow rock walkway on one of the cavern walls. Rocket launcher in hand and blessed with the knowledge the bridge was not, by any means, invincible, you pumped rocket after rocket into the unstable stretch of stone – both in front and behind the hulking tank-like foe.

And then, the bridge fell away – taking the tank and the supporting infantry with it.

Red Faction's rock-blasting GeoMod tech would be used elsewhere in the game to circumvent locked-doors and create new paths, but you never forget your first time.



NEXT

HEAVENLY SWORD™

Check back next month for
the official verdict on the
PS3's sexiest game yet!



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- We visit Epic's studio for the first hands-on with *Unreal Tournament III*!

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shy...?

Entertainer?

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PG

Mild Sexual
References, Mild
Coarse Language,
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PlayStation 2

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